

Communicative challenges in an internationally decentralized nonprofit organization Case: Finn Church Aid

International Business Communication
Master's thesis
Jutta Leivonen
2012



**Aalto University
School of Economics**

Communicative challenges in an internationally decentralized nonprofit organization

Case: Finn Church Aid

Master's Thesis
Jutta Leivonen
Spring 2012
International Business
Communication

Approved in the Department of Communication ___ / __20___ and awarded the grade

Communicative challenges in an internationally decentralized nonprofit organization - Case: Finn Church Aid

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the Thesis is to explore issues that the case organization needs to consider when developing a strategic communication plan for the field offices based in the developing countries. The Thesis will take into consideration both internal and external communications as well as the special conditions of international operating environment in developing countries. The research problem is investigated with the three questions: How do FCA's employees perceive the challenges in the organization's internal communications? How do FCA's employees perceive the field offices' external communication and the possibilities to develop it? What is the impact of the operating environment (i.e. developing countries) on FCA's communications?

Methodology and Data

The research was conducted as a qualitative single case study with semi-structured interviews as the research method. Ten FCA employees were interviewed and they represented employees from the field as well as from the Helsinki headquarters. The theoretical framework guided the research process by taking into consideration all aspects of internal and external communication in the international environment.

Findings and Conclusions

The main findings of the Thesis indicate that the importance of internal and external communications are acknowledged within the case organization. However, communicative problems were identified and due to lack of resources, no actions have been taken to improve the situation. The Thesis provides suggestions concerning internal and external communications and focuses on the impact of the international environment on the development of a communication plan.

Key words:

Nonprofit organization, internal communications, external communications, strategic communications, communication planning, international business communication, decentralized organizational structure

Kansainvälisesti hajautetun kehitysyhteistyöjärjestön viestinnälliset haasteet – Case: Kirkon Ulkomaanapu

Tutkimuksen tavoitteet

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää kansainvälisesti hajautetun, voittoa tavoittelemattoman kehitysyhteistyöjärjestön viestinnällisiä haasteita, jotka liittyvät strategisen viestintäsuunnitelman laatimiseen. Tutkielma keskittyy sekä hyväntekeväisyysorganisaation sisäiseen että ulkoiseen viestintään. Se ottaa huomioon myös kansainvälisen toimintaympäristön kehitysmaissa. Tutkimus pyrkii vastaamaan seuraaviin kysymyksiin: Minkälaisia viestinnällisiä haasteita Kirkon Ulkomaanavun (KUA) työntekijät kohtaavat organisaation sisäisessä viestinnässä? Miten KUA:n työntekijät näkevät kenttätoimistojen ulkoisen viestinnän ja mahdollisuudet kehittää viestintää? Minkälainen vaikutus operatiivisella ympäristöllä (kehitysmaat) on KUA:n viestintään?

Tutkimusmenetelmät ja aineisto

Tämän kvalitatiivisen tapaustutkimuksen tutkimusaineisto kerättiin 10 KUA:n työntekijän haastattelusta, jotka työskentelivät sekä kentällä että Helsingin pääkonttorissa. Teoreettinen viitekehys ohjasi tutkimusprosessia ja otti huomioon sekä sisäisen että ulkoisen viestinnän.

Tutkimuksen tulokset ja johtopäätökset

Tutkimustulokset osoittivat, että sekä ulkoisen että sisäisen viestinnän merkitys on ymmärretty KUA:n työntekijöiden keskuudessa, mutta resurssien vähäisyyden vuoksi viestintää ei ole organisoitu tai kehitetty. Tutkielma tarjoaa konkreettisia kehitysehdotuksia sisäiseen ja ulkoiseen viestintään sekä huomio kansainvälisen toimintaympäristön vaikutukset viestintäsuunnitelman laatimiseksi kenttätoimistoille.

Avainsanat:

Voittoa tavoittelematon järjestö, sisäinen viestintä, ulkoinen viestintä, strateginen viestintä, viestinnän suunnittelu, kansainvälinen yritysviestintä, hajautettu organisaatorakenne

Table of contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Finn Church Aid – action for human dignity.....	3
1.2	Research objectives and questions	5
1.3	Structure of the Thesis	6
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1	Communications in nonprofit organizations.....	8
2.2	International communications.....	23
2.3	Strategic communication planning.....	32
3	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	44
4	METHODS AND DATA	48
4.1	Research methods.....	48
4.2	Research data	50
4.3	Trustworthiness of the study.....	55
5	FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	58
5.1	The role of communications in FCA’s operations	59
5.2	Internal communication culture across borders and time zones	61
5.3	FCA’s external communications in the field	68
5.4	Operating environment	74
5.5	Future prospects and challenges.....	77
5.6	Summary of the findings	80
6	RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS.	81
6.1	Recommendations for creating a communication plan for FCA’s field offices	81
6.2	Enablers for FCA’s communication.....	83
6.3	Overcoming the challenges in FCA’s internal communication.....	87
6.4	Field offices’ external communication potential and the impact of their operational environment.....	90
7	CONCLUSION	94
7.1	Research summary	94
7.2	Main findings and managerial implications.....	96
7.3	Limitations of the research	99
7.4	Suggestions for further research.....	101
	REFERENCES	102
	APPENDICES	109

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Nonprofit development stages	10
Figure 2 Decision making steps.....	15
Figure 3 Influence of culture on behavior and behavior on culture	25
Figure 4 Why do people interpret things differently?	27
Figure 5 Communicating across cultures	28
Figure 6 The McKinsey Seven-S Framework	34
Figure 7 Stages in formulating the content of a communication strategy	37
Figure 8 Communication strategy.....	38
Figure 9 The link between corporate strategy and communication.....	40
Figure 10 Theoretical framework: Communication flow in an international NPO.....	45

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Interviews	52
--------------------------	----

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been an increasing interest towards communication practices in organizations as the importance of communication has gradually been acknowledged. Adler (1997, p.67) claims that “All business activity involves communication”. Many organizations have understood the value that well organized communication may bring. As Aula (2000, p. 49) states, an organization requires interaction, and interaction involves communication. He argues that communication is a vital prerequisite for all social action, and therefore, also for organizations.

Organizations have started establishing communication departments and employing communication professionals to manage communications and ensure a smooth flow of internal and external communication. As people spend the majority of their working time communicating, efficient communication practices are considered to add value and be critical for organizations’ success. Hargie and Tourish (2000, p.5) emphasize this by claiming that effective managers are particularly disposed spending the majority of their time in communication based activities. According to Hargie and Tourish (2000), organizations that have paid attention to effective communication and have executed communication strategies, tend to be more successful and competitive. Argenti (2003), on the other hand, argues that adaptation plays an important role referring to the way organizations modify their behavior through communication according to the changes in the environment. He claims that this will determine their success in the future. Hence, many organizations aim to enhance effective and appropriate communications as it is thought to add value and serve as a competitive advantage.

Communication has received attention in the academic world as well. As communication is such a complex and broad concept, new angles for study still arise. There is a lot of previous research about organizational and international

communication; however, combining organizational communication in the international arena with special features and challenges of nonprofit organizations (NPO) is a fairly new approach. Hardly any studies concentrate on communication practices or strategic communication planning of an NPO operating in an international context. Therefore, the focus of this study is to examine an NPO's communication practices in the international field when the resources are limited and when the organization has recently faced major changes in the organizational structure. By the term *communication* the present Thesis refers to all communication of an organization including unstructured, spontaneous and unplanned communication as well as strategic and planned communication.

The case organization of this Thesis is Finn Church Aid (FCA). FCA has recently gone through substantial structural changes by establishing small field offices in the developing countries. Organizational changes are challenging, and in this case even more so, due to the special conditions caused by the varying cultural and area specific features typical for developing countries. However, many challenges that are faced during organizational changes can be more easily overcome if there is strategic thinking about what and how to communicate as argued by Mei, Lee and Al-Hawamdeh (2003).

The aim of this study is to investigate FCA's field offices' communication practices, and based on the findings, create guidelines for developing a comprehensive communication plan for an international NPO's field offices. The study concentrates on investigating the communication practices of the field offices but the guidelines are created for FCA's communication department situated in Helsinki as the headquarters act as a strategic leader and will thus eventually develop the final communication plans for the field. Finally, the purpose is to present recommendations that will help the communication department in creating the actual, office specific communication plans for the field.

FCA was chosen as the case organization of this Thesis because of the challenging research topic due to recent organizational changes, the actual need of the organization for this investigation, and the author's personal interest towards international charity organizations. The time constraints for the results of the study were real, so it was also a motivating force to take action. The topic decision was influenced by also the author's personal interest in the international communication practices of an NPO and how they possibly differ from for-profit organizations' communication.

1.1 Finn Church Aid – action for human dignity

In this section the case organization of this study, Finn Church Aid (FCA) is briefly introduced. FCA is a major nonprofit organization (NPO) in humanitarian aid and development cooperation in Finland. It executes development cooperation, relief and interchurch aid on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland. FCA was founded in 1947 and currently operates in 30 countries providing assistance when and where it is most needed. The organization works with poor and vulnerable people in developing countries whom they help despite of their religious beliefs, ethnic background or political convictions (FCA Annual Report 2010).

The Finnish government is FCA's largest funder with its funding consisting 37.8 percent of FCA's total income in 2010 (FCA annual report 2010). They have operations in different continents including Africa, Latin-America, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. In 2010, Africa was the largest target area gaining 32.5 percent of the total funding (FCA Annual Report 2010).

FCA cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland. In 2009, the ministry and FCA signed a new funding agreement for three years, 2010-2012, worth 22.2 million. FCA also belongs to an international aid network, ACT

Alliance. ACT Alliance is an alliance of faith-based development and humanitarian aid organizations forming one of the world's largest aid organizations. The annual volume of ACT is 1.1 billion Euros and it operates in 125 countries. FCA's most significant partner in implementing development and disaster relief programs is the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) (FCA Annual Report 2010).

FCA's ultimate goal is to promote justice and reduce poverty in the areas where they operate. Their work is based on three themes that interlink: sustainable livelihoods, stable societies, and rights and participation. Their mission is to change the world through action for human dignity. FCA has formulated their vision as enhancing the living and human dignity of people in the weakest positions. The FCA's core values are: unconditional love for our neighbors, unyielding hope, courage, and quality (FCA Strategy 2009-2012).

FCA implements development cooperation, humanitarian aid and advocacy work. In 2009, they provided assistance with a total budget of approximately EUR 23 million, of which 85.1 percent was spent to relief work (FCA's educational materials, retrieved January 5, 2011 from <http://www.kua.fi/fi/materiaalit/?id=11>).

1.1.1 FCA's organizational structure

FCA has recently gone through major organizational changes. The organization has decentralized its operations by establishing permanent field offices in developing countries around the globe. Earlier, FCA mostly operated from their headquarters in Helsinki. After renewing the organizational strategy, a need for stronger presence in the field emerged. FCA has operations in approximately 30 countries. In 2010, FCA had opened three country-offices in Kenya (two employees), Liberia (three employees) and The Democratic Republic of Congo (three employees), and four regional offices in Bangladesh, Sudan (two employees), Somalia (under development) and Haiti (nine employees). The most

recent field office was opened in Cambodia in spring 2011. By increasing presence on target areas, a possibility to have an impact at the grassroots level was developed and comprehensive communication with the associates was enabled. FCA's presence in the field especially concentrates on post catastrophe and post conflict situations (FCA's Annual Report 2010). In this Thesis the term "field office" is used and it refers to both country and regional offices.

In 2010, humanitarian help was given to 21 countries in total, consisting areas in Europe, South-America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The headquarters are situated in Helsinki, therefore, the strategic alignments, directions and thematic areas of concentration come from Finland. Communications are essential in enabling FCA's dispersed operations.

During the strategic period of 2009-2012, the presence of FCA in the target countries and regions is planned to be increased even further. The organization will invest in its direct cooperation with its associates. By increasing presence in the field, FCA aims at enhancing their transparency, follow-up, reporting, and even deeper participation and involvement in project and program activities.

As FCA's decentralized organizational structure is rather recent, the strategic relation between the headquarters and the field is still under development. The aim is to have the headquarters as a strategic leader for the field. The purpose is to constantly increase decision making power of the field offices as they have the field and area specific practical knowledge of the need of help and the course of action.

1.2 Research objectives and questions

This section introduces the objectives of the study, and presents the research questions that will guide the investigation process. The main objective for the Thesis is to explore issues that FCA needs to consider when developing a strategic

communication plan for the field offices based in the developing countries. Consequently, the aim is to develop a set of guidelines that can later be used as a tool to create the actual communication plans for the field offices.

A communication plan is important for any organization as its most essential purpose is to serve the organization's mission (Vuokko, 2004). With the aid of planned communications, the issues articulated in an organization's mission statement are realized in the organization's activities. At the moment in FCA, no communication strategies or plans exist in the field so guidelines concerning field offices' communications are needed and there is an actual demand for this research.

The Thesis process is guided by the following main research question and three sub-questions:

What issues need to be considered when planning an international nonprofit organization's communications guidelines for decentralized field offices?

- How do FCA's employees perceive the challenges in the organization's internal communications?
- How do FCA's employees perceive the field offices' external communication and the possibilities to develop it?
- What is the impact of the operating environment (i.e. developing countries) on FCA's communications?

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This Thesis is divided into seven chapters. In the introductory chapter the reader is familiarized with the topic and the objectives of the study. Also the case organization, FCA, is introduced. In Chapter 2, relevant literature and previous research on the topic are presented and discussed. This chapter serves as the theoretical background for the empirical part of the study, and Chapter 3

summarizes the theoretical framework of this study. The methods used in the empirical research and data analysis are discussed in Chapter 4. The report proceeds with Chapter number 5, which presents and discusses the findings. The findings are followed by recommendations and practical implications in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 concludes this master's Thesis.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the theoretical background and previous literature which support the objectives of the study. As the aim of the Thesis is to explore what needs to be considered when developing a communication plan for FCA's field offices based in developing countries, the themes that are regarded as important for this specific case study, are included in the literature review below. Topics concerning key characteristics of NPOs and how they impact the communications, the importance of internal communications, issues concerning external and marketing communications, the role of communications in funding, the varying communication channels, the impact of international field in communications, and the issues that need to be considered in strategic communication planning are discussed.

2.1 Communications in nonprofit organizations

Communication takes place everywhere and all the time, but it is neither efficient nor functional if not organized properly. NPOs as any other organizations need to consider and plan their communications comprehensively and efficiently. This section introduces the specific features, key characteristics and common challenges that have been identified in NPOs' communicative practices.

2.1.1. *Key characteristics of nonprofit organizations*

For the purposes of the present Thesis, it is relevant to discuss the key characteristics that NPOs have and study to what extent NPOs' communicative practices differ from for-profit organizations. Researching NPO's attributes enables understanding their special features and contexts.

According to Vuokko (2004, p.14), the term *nonprofit organization* refers to an organization whose primary purpose is not to make a profit, but instead, the organization's mission is emphasized. An NPO's purpose is to serve the public (Wolf, 1999, p. 19) and they exist to bring change to individuals and societies

(Drucker, 1990, p.3). This means that in NPOs, it is important to recognize for what cause and for whom the actions are taken.

It was rather difficult for the author to decide whether to use the term *nonprofit organization* (NPO) or *non-governmental organization* (NGO) in the study. NGO is defined by the Britannica Academic Encyclopedia as, “voluntary group of individuals or organizations, usually not affiliated with any government, that is formed to provide services or to advocate a public policy. Although some NGOs are for-profit corporations, the vast majority are nonprofit organizations. Some NGOs, particularly those based in authoritarian countries, may be created or controlled by governments” (visited 21 November 2011). Even though FCA is naturally also an NGO and the distinction between the two concepts is vague, in this Thesis, the term NPO is used because at FCA, they commonly use the term nonprofit organization when describing their organization and the term is also used by several researchers.

NPOs differ from for-profit companies due to other objectives than profit making. Consequently, measuring the success of operations may be more difficult. Courtney (2002, p. 46) claims that NPOs lack clear indicators of success whereas for-profit companies’ achievements are easier to measure. Henley (2001, p. 143) agrees with this by stating that NPOs are often much more complex due to multiple non-financial objectives that may be hard to evaluate. Courtney (2002, p. 46) rather suggests that the difficulty of measuring the success of NPOs is caused by the multiple stakeholders that they have.

The complexity and diversity of NPOs show how difficult it may be to make clear boundaries between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. Even though financial benefits are not the primary goal of an NPO, it does not mean that these organizations would not have any financial objectives. According to Vuokko (2004, p.20), NPOs’ financial objectives can be, for instance, to cover the

expenses, to minimize deficit and expenses, or to attain a financial surplus. With this surplus, organizations can operate according to their mission.

In NPOs values and mission, the core of their existence, play an important role. Vernis et al. (2006, p.16) argue that starting an NPO without having thoroughly thought through and developed the mission and a set of values, will not end up successfully. They continue by arguing that values, which are the differentiating factor in NPOs, should guide all the actions that are undertaken. (See Figure 1) If the values are unclear and are not shared by all members, or in the worst case, are not even set, organizations may easily end up facing external and internal contradictions. According to Vernis et al. (2006, p.16) organizations need to know their mission and values before starting to operate.

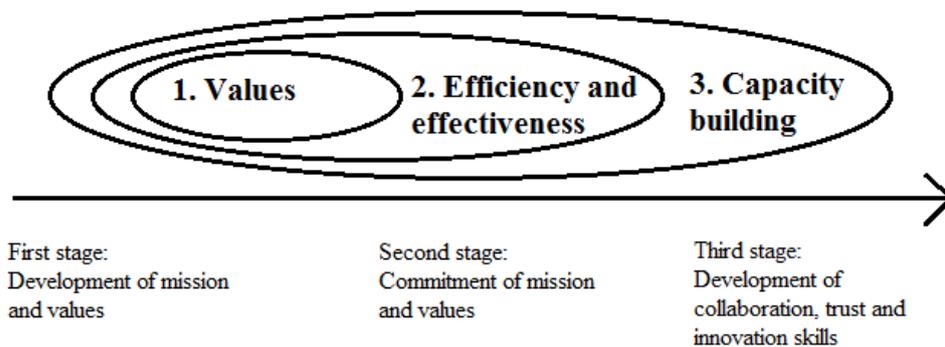


Figure 1 Nonprofit development stages (Vernis et al., 2006, p.16)

According to Courtney (2002, p. 48), the way of considering cooperation versus competition is also one of the differences between for-profit and nonprofit sectors. NPOs tend to aim at cooperation rather than competition, even though also private sector organizations have started to realize that strategic alliances and cooperation may be important in order for them to stay competitive (Courtney, 2002, p. 48).

NPOs usually have several constituencies, both internal and external. Knowing the constituencies is important in planning the organization's communication according to the constituencies' interests. Henley (2001, p. 143) claims that

despite of the different challenges that NPOs face, each of them needs yet to reach the target audiences and get its message through in the most efficient way.

According to Henley (2001), internal groups might include, for example, clients, members and donors. Potential clients, media, community and foundations are considered to be external publics.

Even though some characteristics common for all NPOs can be found, the diversity within them is wide as well, and therefore, generalizations are impossible. As Weisbrod (1988, p. 9) claims, NPOs are far from a homogenous group as the constraints and motives differ to a large extent. He states that the variation among NPOs is as extensive as among governmental organizations or for-profit companies.

As discussed in this sub-section, NPOs have specific features that separate them from for-profit organization mainly in their purpose of existence, source of funding, and way to measure success. These features are important to understand when planning communications for an NPO.

2.1.2. The importance of planned internal communications

In this sub-section, the importance of planned internal communication and its characteristics is discussed. Thus this section excludes spontaneous, interpersonal internal communication even though it is naturally also vital for an organization to operate. According to Clutterbuck and James (1996), internal planned communication as a function is one of the fastest growing management disciplines. It is a management process linked with developing an organization's behaviors, attitudes, understanding, roles, culture, skills, and channels necessary to enable employees in achieving their goals (Clutterbuck and James, 1996).

Cornelissen (2008, p.195) defines the term *internal communication* as “communication with employees internally within the organization”. Clutterbuck

and James (1996) further suggests that it is generally agreed that internal communication should be an exchange of information, responses, ideas and feelings from which the organization's mutual talent and commitment are directed in order to achieve organizational and individual objectives.

The importance of effective, i.e. to some extent coordinated, internal communication cannot be overstated (O'Connor and Szukala, 2001, Meade, 2010). Meade (2010) claims that if internal communication is efficient, it adds value in many forms to the organization, and smooth communication brings consistency to the workplace and makes coordination easier. Within an organization where internal communication works, employees share a sense of belonging in the organization as a whole, not just in their own department or team (Meade, 2010). Meade (2010) claims that the ideal organizational culture should be one that encourages collaboration, loyalty and innovation. Internal communication plays an important role in this. O'Connor and Szukala (2001) continue by arguing that internal communication also energizes teams and builds commitment to shared objectives.

According to Dortok (2006, p. 331), well-organized internal communication may even have a positive impact on an organization's reputation. In order to support efficient and smooth internal communication, Hewitt (2006) suggests that a positive communication climate that is built upon strong relationships between an organization and its employees should take place. The ideal organizational culture is one that cultivates collaboration, loyalty and innovation (Meade, 2010). Meade (2010) continues by explaining that if a strong organizational culture is wanted, the individuals belonging to the organization should be valued and formal channels to keep the members informed, need to be in place.

As mentioned earlier, all strategic organizational communication should be in line with the organization's core strategy and mission. Hence, it is important that employees know the strategy and mission in order to be able to assimilate and

identify to it. Quirke (1996) points out that also the internal communication strategy should support the organization's strategy. He explains that often when complaints about inefficient or poor internal communication arise, a typical communication audit will not identify the real issue of the mismatch between organizational strategy and communication strategy. Argenti (2003, p. 127) states that "More than anything, good internal communication can connect employees to a company's strategy and vision. " Therefore, the communication patterns and strategy should be in line with the organizational strategy.

As explained above, efficient internal communication is considered to have an impact on an organization's success. Even though the organizational objectives differ between NPOs and for-profit organizations, the communicative needs and importance of internal communications are similar to all organizations. Therefore, research concerning internal communications presented above is relevant also for NPOs, thus for the case organization of this Thesis. Meade (2010) claims that good internal communication requires planning, organization and commitment. In order to enable competent internal communication, attention needs to be paid to organizing the communication. Organizational culture, motivation, and regular communication practices are important factors in enhancing internal communication within any organization.

2.1.3. External communications and marketing

All organizations that have external interest groups also have external communication. By external communication, the author refers to any communication that is targeted for the stakeholders outside the organization. Marketing communications is part of an organization's external communications. According to Vuokko (2004), marketing communications has typically been related to entrepreneurship and increasing profits. However, it can also be adapted to organizations whose primary goal is not to make profit. Vuokko (2004, p.20) states, that marketing thinking is also needed in NPOs even though they do not

seek to make profit. Nevertheless, NPOs aim at increasing the popularity of their products, services, organizations, or matters they are promoting. Consequently, marketing communication is needed.

Vuokko (2004, p. 46) defines NPO's marketing as follows (translation by the author):

“Marketing is a management process and a way of thinking. Its purpose is to recognize, predict, and satisfy the needs of an organization's important stakeholder groups, and to do it in a way that supports the organization to reach its key objectives”.

According to Vuokko (2004, p.29), the term “nonprofit” does not mean “no marketing”. Katsioloudes (2006, p.288) There are numerous reasons to do marketing in NPOs (Katsioloudes, 2006, p.288), and they need to market themselves in order to raise awareness, operate, and reach their objectives and goals. Katsioloudes (2006, p.271) suggests that the most effective marketing approaches are those that differentiate the NPO, answering to questions such as: What makes the organization special? What does it have that others don't have? What is the choice you offer to clients? How will you affect their personalities? The purpose of marketing according to Vuokko (2004, p.14) is to link the organization with its existing and intended external interest groups. These kinds of linkages are also needed in NPOs. Vuokko (2004, p.39) argues that NPOs' marketing is not solely about encouraging voluntary people to join but also about developing the activities. According to her, marketing is not necessarily compulsory or essential, but some of the needs and objectives that an organization has can be reached by modifying and developing marketing thinking, planning and means. Katsioloudes (2006, p. 288) claims that NPOs have done excellent work in increasing public awareness through marketing.

For marketing an NPO, Vuokko (2004) proposes that knowledge of how to market an organization as a provider of important and valuable services that are

worth funding, is needed. She argues that marketing influences and executes changes. In her book, Vuokko (2004, p. 40) introduces *the stairs of influencing* (See Figure 2). The figure presents the decision making steps. The stairs express the marketing challenges when influencing people and causing actions.

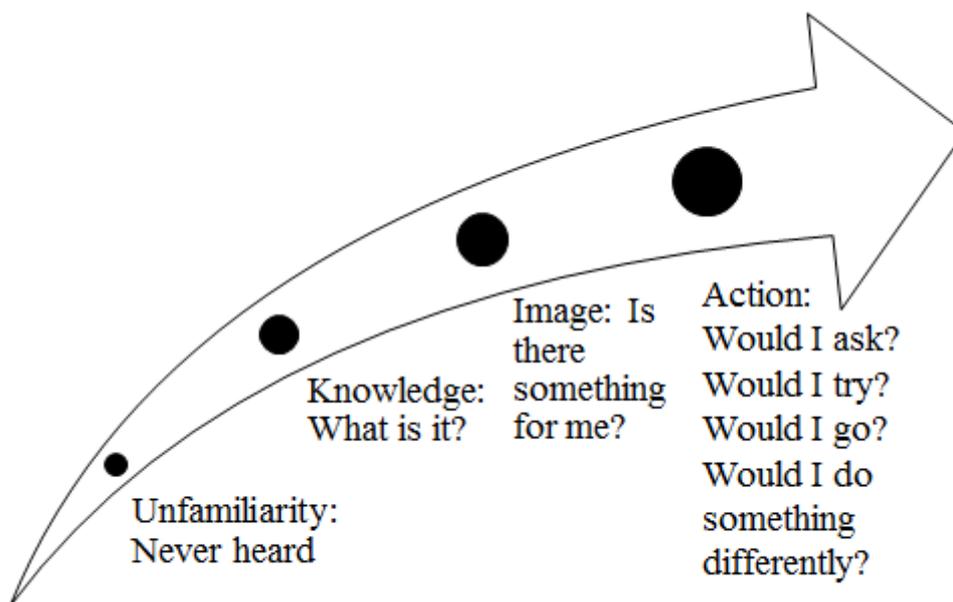


Figure 2 Decision making steps (Vuokko, 2004, p. 40, translated by the author)

At the beginning, the organization is unfamiliar for the target group and unfamiliarity hinders decision making and actions (Vuokko, 2004, p.40). The first step to climb is the *knowledge step*. It is important to remember that the knowledge step is reached only when an individual is familiar with the organization and its actions. This requires strategic communication by taking the target groups into account.

The next step is the *image step*. Here the organization is evaluated by providing an answer to the question, “What does it offer for me?” If the answer does not please the potential stakeholder, climbing the stairs will not proceed and other

organizations will be considered. However, if the target group thinks that “There could be something for me”, the decision making process continues to the last step of the stairs of influencing.

On the *action step*, a stakeholder asks, sees, tries, and participates. Experiences gained on the last step define the follow-up. For that reason it is important that people gain a positive image of the organization. Marketing plays a central role in this.

It is vital to research marketing from the target groups’ perspectives to be able to modify and adapt communications in accordance with the stakeholders’ expectations. Vuokko (2004, p.31) divides charities’ potential target groups and needs for marketing purposes as follows:

- Members (activating, engaging)
- Targets of the activities and their families (telling about the activities)
- Funders (offering the financial funding)
- Donors (offering the donations)
- Voluntary workers (getting more people to join)
- Decision makers (bringing out the organization’s issues)

Vuokko (2004, p.113) claims that planning marketing is important but challenging. She suggests that limited resources, attitudes towards marketing, and lack of understanding its importance and potential make it even more complex for NPOs. NPOs do not automatically have resources to spend on marketing due to their nature. However, as Katsioloudes (2006, p. 288) argues, good marketing and public relations activities will not only benefit the organization, but they also benefit the public. Vuokko (2004, p.113) describes that as NPOs have only recently started realizing the potential that lies in marketing, the management board is still skeptical towards using resources for it. Another reason for multifaceted marketing planning in NPOs is the fact that many decisions are made

actually outside the organization. The personnel may totally consist of voluntary workers who are interested in active operations rather than planning (ibid).

This sub-section covered the issues that need to be considered in NPOs' external communication. Often marketing communication is considered to concern only for-profit organizations, but NPOs can also benefit from it. Efficient external communication can be used as a tool to send the wanted message to external stakeholder groups and to influence how the organization is seen by different constituencies. Thus, it needs to be carefully considered and planned.

2.1.4. Creating image and reputation through communications

In this sub-section, an organization's image and reputation are discussed. The author suggests that these two terms are not mutually exclusive but rather supplementary so both terms are needed in the discussions. The importance of both concepts for an organization's communication has been noted also in previous literature. A body of literature suggests that an organization's reputation and image play an important role when creating a coherent communication strategy (cf. Argenti, 2003, p.26, Dortok, 2006).

Reputation

Reputation is defined as something that people talk and tell about (Aula, 2000, p. 176, Aula & Mantere, 2005, p.31) or as "An individual's collective representation of past images of an organization (induced through either communication or past experiences) established over time." (Cornelissen, 2011, p. 8). Vuokko (2004, p.192) argues that an organization's reputation consists of the understandings of an organization's activities conducted over time. Aula (2000, p.170) states that an organization's reputation is based on its actions. It is a resource that, at its best, helps an organization to be prepared and to create its own future (ibid).

Reputation is, according to Aula and Heinonen (2002, p.61), stakeholder group's evaluation of the organization. This evaluation is based on the stakeholder group's image and personal experiences. Thus, the reputation is a combination of individuals' varying images of the organization, which form the actual reputation. In other words, as Aula and Heinonen (2002, p. 61) claim, an organization can have only one reputation that consists of several elements and always bases on an organization's real actions.

According to Aula and Mantere (2005, p. 32), reputation exists among an organization's stakeholder groups. It lies deep in people's minds and it may be hard to change. Vuokko (2004, p.192) claims that reputation often consists of different views of varying stakeholder groups. Reputation is important and consists of similar elements and stakeholder group's views, regardless of whether the organization is nonprofit or for-profit.

Doorley and Garcia (2007) suggest that a positive reputation has a positive impact on an organization's ability to operate and do business. Aula and Mantere (2005, p.32) agree with this by stating that it has been said that positive reputation brings indirect profits for an organization. An organization's positive reputation is not only a result of careful management but it comes from inside the organization (ibid). Doorley and Garcia (2007) argue that since reputation is the sum of performance, behavior, and communication, the communication strategy must be effective and comprehensive. Thus, reputation is in many respects a matter of an organization's communication (Aula, 2000, p.176, Aula and Mantere, 2005, p. 79).

According to Dortok (2006), different stakeholders' expectations need to be identified in order to be able to manage the organizational reputation. Cornelissen (2011, p.129) claims that continuous research monitoring and assessing what stakeholders think of the organization and whether their view is in line with the projected organizational identity, is important. Because reputation is seen as

something intangible, organizations often do not have formal programs to manage it (Doorley and Garcia, 2007). Dortok (2006, p. 323) mentions that reputation has become a major concern for organizations, and is a value that is hard to achieve but can be easily lost.

Image

Whereas reputation is established over time, image is, according to Cornelissen (2011, p. 8) “The immediate set of associations of an individual in response to one or more signals or messages from or about a particular organization at a single point in time.” Vuokko (2004) suggests that an NPO’s image is as important as it is for any company. “Image is a reflection of an organization’s identity.” (Argenti, 2003, p. 58). According to Vuokko (2004), image is subjective understanding that an individual has of an organization; it is a person’s comprehension of the surrounding world. Cornelissen (2011, p. 69) agrees with this by claiming that image is “the image or impression that outside stakeholders have of the organization”. In other words, as Argenti (2003, p. 58) phrases it, image refers to an organization as seen through the eyes of its constituencies.

An organization may have varying images with different constituencies, and identifying them can be challenging. In order to understand different constituencies’ varying views, needs, and attitudes, they need to be researched. Vuokko (2004) claims, that it is important to remember that even though different stakeholder groups’ images may not be in line with the organization’s understanding of their own image, they are never faulty.

As explained above, the reputation and image are largely important in an organization’s successfulness as they tell how the organization is seen by the external stakeholders. The reputation is an individual’s collective representation of past images of an organization developed over time whereas the image is a stakeholder’s immediate set of association. Even though neither image nor

reputation can be controlled, external communication plays a crucial role in forming them.

2.1.5. Role of communication in funding

The majority of NPOs are highly dependent on contributions to fund their activities that are critical for their successful missions (Key, 2000). According to Drucker (1990, p. 41), the source of money is the greatest single difference when the nonprofit sector is compared with business or government. Anheir (2005, p.204) claims that the revenue structure of NPOs is more complex compared to for-profit organizations or public agencies. He argues that NPOs usually have a mix of different sources of revenue. According to Drucker (1990), NPOs raise the majority of the money from donors who want to participate in the cause but who do not benefit from it. Furthermore, Drucker (1990, p. 43) proposes that donors need to be educated so that they can recognize and accept the results from their funding, and they need to understand what the organization is trying to do. Efficient external communication plays an important role in this.

According to Drucker (1990, p. 59), fund-raising requires careful research and identification of potential sources for funds, and motives for donating. Increasing awareness among funders and clear communication of the operations are extremely important. External communication is needed when stating the aim of funding and building and reinforcing trust. Sargeant and Lee (2004, p.185) suggest that results and achievements of funding are often intangible, hard to measure and invisible for the donors, so trust between the donor and the NPO is crucial.

In this sub-section, NPOs' funding and the importance of communication in gaining it were discussed. Funding is a lifeline for NPOs, and without efficient communications funding is impossible to get as if no-one knows about an

organization or their operations, no money will be invested. Thus, the importance of funding and communication in gaining it is evident.

2.1.6. Communication channels

This section introduces previous research on the variety and the importance of communication channels. Communication channels refer to means and media used to get a message sent (Hargie and Tourish, 2004, p. 11). The channels in internal and external communication depend on each organization's needs, so the appropriate channel is chosen based on this demand. Thus, the same channels are used regardless whether an organization is for-profit or nonprofit.

A variety of communication channels can be used to reach the targeted receivers and the goals of the communication. According to Windahl, Signitzer and Olson (1992), the channel should be chosen in consideration with the audience, objectives, and contents of the message. Munter (2009) divides communication channels into written and oral channels. Written channels include, for instance, hard copies, public internet, websites, blogs, wikis, and emails. Telephones, voice mails, podcasts, and conference calls are examples of oral channels. Jones (2008, p. 33) proposes that the purpose of communication channels is to reach as many of the target recipients as possible, as reliably and quickly as possible, and to get the maximum feedback from them. Klein (1994) claims that whichever channel is chosen, a possibility to equal access to the message among all stakeholders in question should be guaranteed.

Jones (2008, p. 33) adds face-to-face communication into the list of oral channels. Klein (1994, p. 27) stresses the importance of face-to-face communication by arguing that it is the most effective way to communicate due to its immediacy and interaction. Clutterbuck and James (1996) agree with this by proposing that the majority of communication should be face-to-face and originate from trusted sources. The importance of face-to-face communication is evident according to

several researchers; however, it is not possible in all situations in every organization at all times. In fact, some researchers argue that the richest channel of communication is a combination of channels (Munter, 2009, p.35, Jones, 2008, p. 34).

Communication as well as organizations and their dispersed operations are very different today compared to what they were fifteen years ago. Technological innovations and the internet have reshaped communication channels and their usage. Information flows faster and reaches people regardless of their physical location. Thereby, communication channel options are more diverse than ever before. Jones (2008, p.35) argues that communication channels cannot be owned or controlled by organizations anymore. He claims that the communication channels that internet provides are owned by the people who use them. In other words, people who use the internet have power to decide which parts of the messages they pay attention to. The challenge is to implement and use influential channels.

One of the most remarkable offshoots from the internet has been email (Tourish & Hargie, 2004, p. 83). Meade (2010) claims that email and instant messaging are the most common channels of internal organizational communication today. Even though email is a significant communication tool in today's organizations, critique has been presented. According to a study by Hewitt (2006), the possible obstacles in email use were the distribution lists that were not up-to-date, and that people were misusing emails by not thinking to whom the information is relevant for and, consequently, irritating recipients by sending irrelevant information. Hewitt (2006) claims that benefits that emails have as a medium have also been debated due to lack of ability to convey situational cues. Email has partly replaced telephone and written communication in organizations. Hewitt (2006) adds that an exceeding use of emails may lead to information overload and an over dependence on technology at the expense of face-to-face communication.

The Intranet is also a widely used communication and information sharing tool in organizations. While external focus is important, Doorley and Garcia (2007) claim that the internal site or intranet is equally significant. It is a central place from where employers find information and where they can share it.

According to Tourish and Hargie (2004, p.82), the intranet flattens the organizational structure and introduces ‘any-to-any’ connectivity within an organization and, consequently facilitates increased cooperation among employees. They continue by stating that an increased information flow due to the use of intranet may lead to strategic advantages such as improved decision making and innovation.

Shared workspaces, Web conferencing, online video and discussion boards are also widely used communication channels. Meade (2010) suggests that these tools are unlikely to completely replace face-to-face interaction; however, their dominance will grow as newer social media are brought to the workplace.

As mentioned in this sub-section, the choice of a communication channel plays an important role in delivering messages and in attaining the receivers. There are several decisions to consider when choosing the channel. The communication channel operates as a means to deliver the message to appropriate stakeholders and, hence, plays a vital role in successful communication and in organization’s operations despite of its for-profit or nonprofit nature. Particularly, it needs to be noted that the internet has reshaped the communication environment and possibilities.

2.2 International communications

This section concentrates on cultural and language related issues relevant for NPOs operating in the international field. Recently, there has been a lot of research focusing on international and intercultural communication. Samovar et

al. (2006, p.357) suggest that intercultural communication competence is the capability to acknowledge, respect, tolerate, and integrate cultural differences. Adler (1997, p.2) claims that “Definitions of success now transcend national boundaries”, thus the international focus in organizations’ operations and their communication practices is vital. The area of intercultural communication is wide, as a quote from Gudykunst and Kim (1984) presented by Windahl et al. (1992, p.26) also attests, “All communication is intercultural”.

2.2.1 Impact of culture in communication

In today’s globalized world, communication is often intercultural and culture has an impact on every aspect of communication (Munter, 2009). According to Windahl et al. (1992, p.27), “Culture is a decisive context to take into account”. Consequently, culture needs to be considered also in NPOs’ communication. Ulijn et al. (2000, p.299) introduce three different but moderately overlapping contexts of culture: national-, corporate-, and professional culture. However, as the case organization of the present Thesis is internationally dispersed, this sub-section, concentrates on the impact that national cultures have on communication.

There are numerous definitions for culture. Samovar et al. (2006, p. 10) state that “culture is the rules for living and functioning in society”. Adler (2002, p.16) cites the anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952, p.181) who offer a comprehensive and commonly accepted definition: “Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the other hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditioning elements of future action.”

Samovar, Porter and McDaniel (2006, p. 7) define intercultural communication as follows: “Intercultural communication occurs whenever a message produced in one culture must be processed in another culture”. Adler (2002, p. 75) sees the concept similarly as she claims that cross-cultural communication happens when a person sends a message to another culture than his/her own. People coming from different national cultures communicate differently, use varying communication strategies to build relationships and to develop social and relational capital (Zhu, Nel & Bhat, 2006, p. 322). The relationship between a culture and an individual’s behavior is presented in Figure 3.

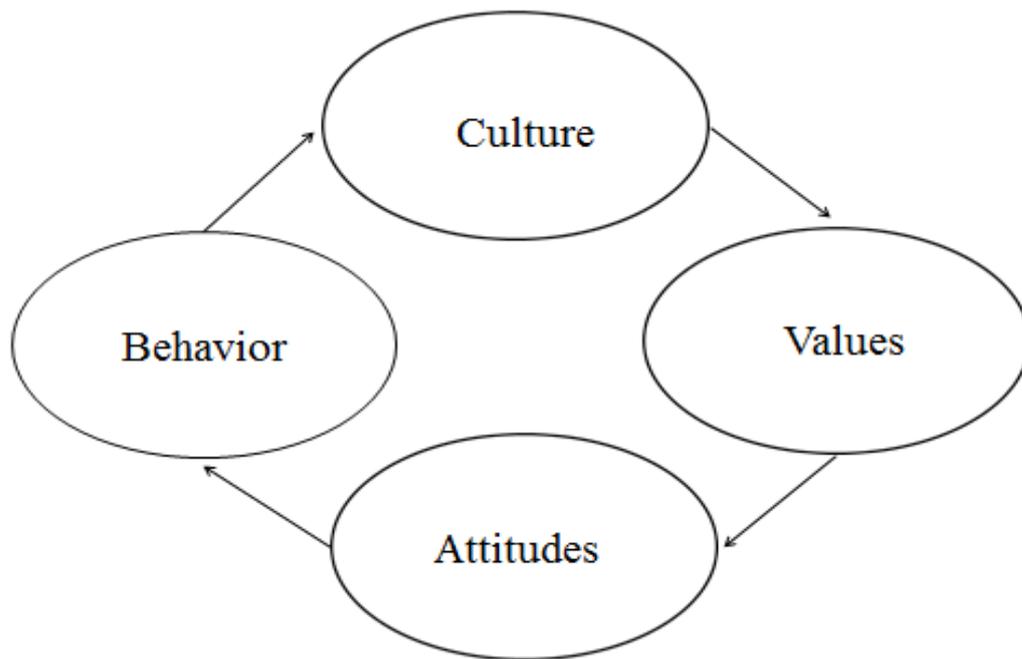


Figure 3 Influence of culture on behavior and behavior on culture (Adler, 2002, p. 17)

As shown in Figure 3, individuals express culture and its normative qualities through the values that they hold about the surrounding world. These values in turn have an impact on their attitudes about the type of behavior considered more appropriate and efficient in any given situation (Adler, 1997, p.15). It is a circle

that explains the relations between the four factors giving an insight to an individual's behavior within a particular culture.

Eckert (2006, p.15) claims that there are two things to remember about culture. First of all, as Argenti (2003) also argues, culture is constantly changing. This means that the values change as well, with the culture, depending on the time and geographical location. Eckert (2006) points out that perspectives, practices, and products of a certain culture are significant factors in defining unique expectations, assumptions, humor, and symbols of that culture. Therefore, it is common that there are differences in culture from one generation to another. Another matter to keep in mind according to Eckert (2006, p. 15), is that broad and generalized description of a group (e.g. Finns) rarely serves as a truthful representation of individuals belonging to it. People may also be part of various sub-groups within a culture (e.g. Sami or Swedish speaking Finns). The danger of stereotyping needs to be kept in mind as it often exists when talking about cultures (Munter, 2009, Jameson, 2007). Jameson (2007) proposes that knowledge about culture does not ensure that communication is successful but it might help in understanding people's behavior, reactions and way of interpretation.

In Figure 4, Eckert (2006, p.49) identifies the factors that are influenced by varying cultural backgrounds. She points out that each individual has his/her own particular cultural lenses that serve as a filter through which one views the surrounding world, creates meanings, and interprets verbal and nonverbal signals.

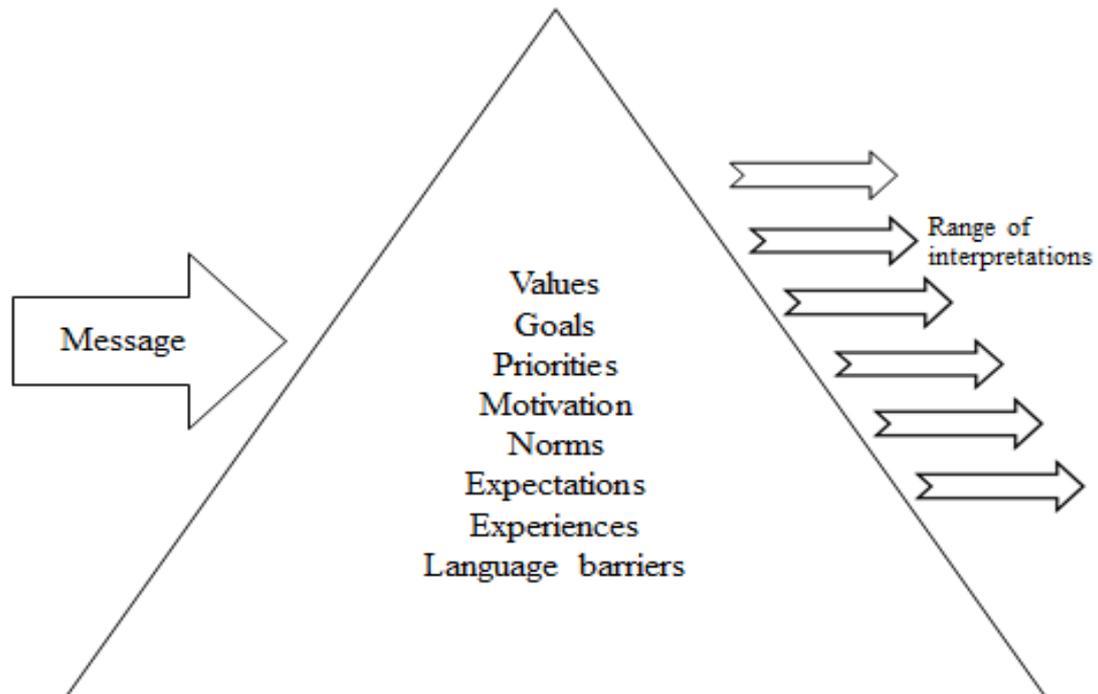


Figure 4 Why do people interpret things differently? (Eckert, 2006, p.49)

Adler (2002, p. 74) proposes that communication includes any behavior the other person observes and interprets: it is interpersonal understanding of what is meant. Adler (2002) continues by suggesting that communication includes sending both verbal and non-verbal messages. Verbal messages refer to words whereas non-verbal messages mean, for instance, facial expressions, tone, and behavior. Also communication style, time, audience selection, persuasion techniques, message structure, channel choice, gender-based tendencies, nonverbal behavior, and greetings and hospitality, need to be considered (Adler, 2002). Miscommunication occurs when a receiver from the other culture does not receive a sender's intended message. This message can be either from spontaneous or strategic and planned communication. Figure 5 shows that the sent message is rarely similar to the received one. According to Adler (2002, p. 74), this is because communication is never direct but rather symbolic behavior.

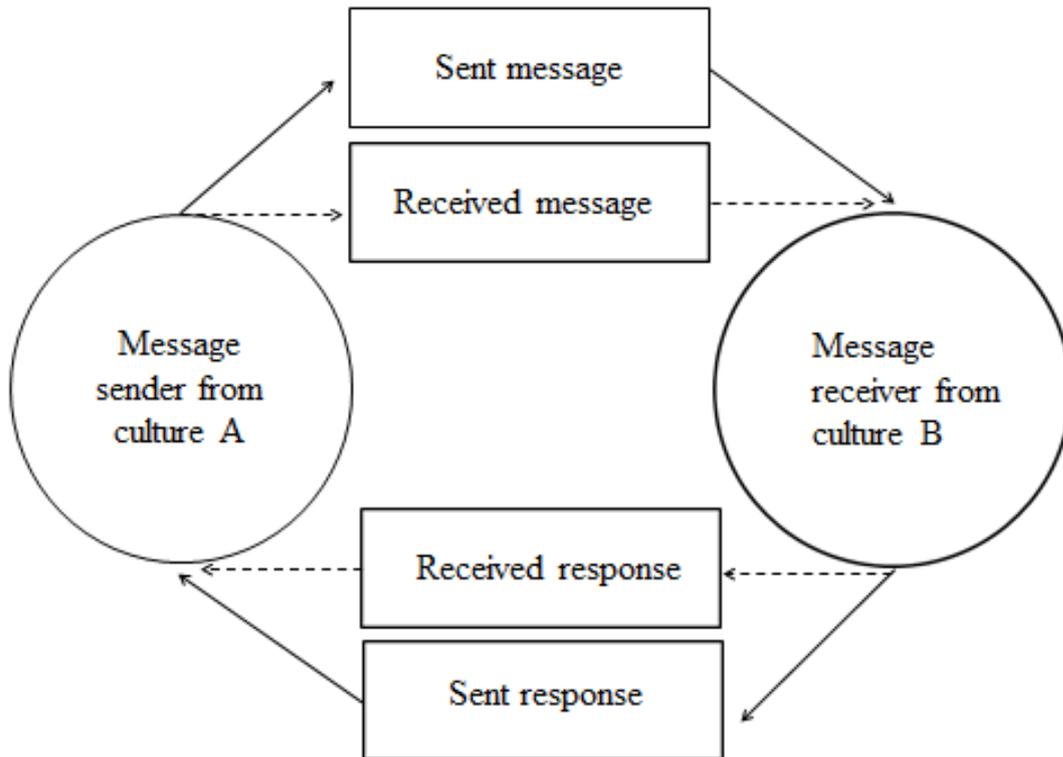


Figure 5 Communicating across cultures (Adler, 2002, p. 74)

Munter (2002) claims, that communication with people from different cultural backgrounds requires sensitive listening skills and strategic understanding of the organization’s needs. Jameson (2007) argues that sensitive listening helps in understanding the multidimensional backgrounds that people have. According to her, also class, profession, religion, gender, and other components have an equal influence on cultural identity as do nationality and ethnicity. Jameson (2007) states, that focusing merely on nationality may mislead people to be confident in their ability to interact and communicate effectively in intercultural situations.

“Intercultural communication is an important form of human interactions that has been practiced for as long as people from different cultures have encountered one another.” (Samovar et al., 2006, p.1) The issues handled in this sub-section are

relevant for everyday, spontaneous communication, but also for an organization's strategic communication. Samovar et al. (2006, p.99) suggest that there are two things to consider in order to relate efficiently with people from different cultures. First of all, knowledge and understanding about the people from the other countries is needed, and secondly, the different culture and the diversity should be respected.

2.2.2 *Common organizational language*

Many organizations have recently expanded globally and decentralized their activities. Employees come from various countries and cultural backgrounds, and speak different languages as their mother tongue. According to van den Born and Peltokorpi (2010), employees in multinational organizations often differ in terms of their native languages and in the prowess of communicating in the official corporate language. As Doorley and Garcia (2007) conclude, the choice of shared language or languages for organizational communication is the key decision that needs to be considered carefully. Charles (2007, p. 274) states "Language unites people and organizations – but also divides them." In other words, language may be strength for an organization but can also cause major challenges. In this subsection the issues that multinational organizations, including NPOs, face concerning the shared organizational language decision are discussed.

Welch, Welch, and Marchan-Piekkari (2001) claim that for organizations that come from rather small countries and speak a language that is only little used abroad, it is natural to include another language at a fairly early stage of their internationalization. Hence, these multinational organizations face the dilemma of making decisions on how to organize communication and which language is set to be the common language - *lingua franca* - in the organization.

Charles (2007) argues that the choice of language(s), especially in intra-corporate communication, is a delicate and complex issue that requires an increasing

amount of management attention. The dominance of English as a *lingua franca* in international business interactions is commonly accepted as a fact (Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen & Piekkari, 2006, Welch et al., 2001, Ehrenreich, 2010). However, the introduction of English as a common organizational language does not automatically lead to the adoption of the language, nor does it make it shared and widely used throughout the organization (Fredriksson et al., 2006 Welch et al., 2001, Doorley and Garcia, 2007).

Charles (2007) points out that the ability to use the official language and to operate in it, gives the individuals access to corporate-level information. As Welch et al. (2002) state, personal incompetence in foreign languages may constraint a person's ability to communicate and get information from those using the foreign language. The foreign language ability of a firm is the sum of its employees' language competences (Welch et al., 2002).

Language training is considered to be vital in order to improve employees' language competences. van den Born and Peltokorpi (2010) suggest that simultaneous progress in local employees' proficiency in the organizational language and expatriates' prowess of the host country language not only increases the language fluency in these two languages, but also reduces intergroup boundaries due to mutual interest in enhancing language skills. According to Doorley and Garcia (2007, p.247), a common corporate language, assuming that everybody is competent in it, reduces also the chance of translation errors and makes the preparation of documents easier.

However, if all employees do not have same competence level in organizational language, challenges may arise. Welch et al. (2001) claims that language competence may give some individuals increased power within an organization. In case of a subsidiary that is situated abroad, the communication and information flow may go only through one person who is competent in the language of the mother organization. The receivers of the information are chosen based on the

language skills, not on the content of the information and to whom it is meant for. This is by no means appropriate and justifies the importance of a commonly shared and understood organizational language.

In their article, Charles and Marchan-Piekkari (2002) give recommendations for enhancing horizontal communication within an organization. With the term “horizontal communication” Charles and Marchan-Piekkari (2002) refer to the communication that takes place between individuals at the same hierarchical levels but in diverse organizational units, such as foreign subsidiaries. First of all, they recommend conducting a linguistic audit. The purpose of this is to spot potential problems in communication and language use. The second recommendation is to prioritize specific comprehension proficiency. Charles and Marchan-Piekkari (2002) state, that employees should be encouraged to accomplish reasonable comprehension proficiency in a foreign language. Comprehension would be useful in their everyday work without having to learn to speak or write the language. The third recommendation by Charles and Marchan-Piekkari (2002) is to encourage employees to understand and negotiate *global English*. Proper British or American English may be very different from the non-native speakers’ English with varying accents. Ehrenreich (2010, p.410) claims that there is general agreement in previous research that English used in international communication is not the same as the English used by native speakers locally in their home countries. Finally, Charles and Marchan-Piekkari (2002) recommend making language training a corporate level function.

These linguistic issues are common for any international organization. As argued by Fredriksson et al. (2006), if the multilingual character of the multinational organization context is not appropriately recognized, a great deal of the communication efforts may be inefficient or even disadvantageous.

2.3 Strategic communication planning

Organizations are starting to realize the meaning of efficient communication but rarely prioritize it compared to other issues (Quirke, 1996), i.e. communication is considered to be a secondary matter. Quirke (1996) states that communication is regarded as something to be handled when there is time, or it is easily delegated to the communications department. Meade (2010) continues by claiming that the decisions concerning the content, timing and channels of communication are still often left to the individual communicators. Most organizations recognize the importance and need for good communication but what still remains, is the lack of understanding the scope of communication, and the actual role it plays within an organization. (Quirke, 1996)

In this section, strategic communication planning is discussed. According to Windahl, et al. (1992, p.1), communication planning is a broad and complex concept. However, strategic and defined communication is important as justified by Doorley and Garcia (2007) who argue that one key factor to success is strategically organized communication: the focus should be on achieving defined organizational and communication goals. Munter (2009, p.4) agrees with this by claiming that a strategically effective communicator refers to a person who receives the desired response or outcome from the communication. Since the aim of the Thesis, as explained in the first chapter, is to help an NPO to plan and organize their field offices' communication towards a more strategic and organized direction, in the following sub-sections, arguments justifying the significance of strategic communication planning and how to do it are presented.

2.3.1 Characteristics of strategic planning

According to Katsioloudes (2006, p.246) many NPOs do not employ the strategic planning process because they have little sense of competition, and in some cases “thinking strategically” is not part of an NPOs' culture. Bryson (1988, p. 163) defines a strategy as an extension of the organization's mission to form a bridge

between the organization and its environment. Katsiolouides (2006, p.13) offers another definition claiming that “The word strategy refers to the method of achievement, a planned operation in the execution of a project”.

Argenti (2003, p.12) suggests that the way organizations adapt and change their behavior through communication according to the current environment, will determine their success in the future. Hence, examining the organization’s external and internal operating environment is vital in strategy creation.

Katsiolouides (2006, p.69) introduces the SWOT analysis, originally created by Albert Humphrey in 1960s, as a good method to audit the environment in which an organization exists. He claims that the SWOT analysis serves the same important functions for NPOs as it does for for-profit organizations, and they should not be overlooked. In the SWOT analysis, an organization’s strengths and weaknesses are analyzed referring to internal investigations whereas opportunities and threats pertain to an external, environmental analysis.

The strengths and weaknesses form the basis for an organization’s internal analysis. Katsiolouides (2006, p.100) states strengths to be “positive attributes or abilities unique to the organization that in some way enhance the organization’s ability to achieve its objectives” whereas weaknesses are referred to be “internal negative attributes or perhaps inabilities unique to the organization that in some way have led (or will probably lead) to the organization’s failure to achieve its objectives.” Katsiolouides (2006, p.100) emphasizes the importance of doing as comprehensive an internal and external analysis of an organization as possible.

Katsiolouides (2006, p.94) stresses the importance of preparing an external evaluation of an organization’s environment. Furthermore, he claims that such an evaluation is critical to the organization in terms of becoming and remaining competitive. Katsiolouides (2006, p.94) suggests that the basic starting point is identifying the organization’s opportunities and threats, which are considered to have a potential impact on the operations. Also the organizational and national

cultures are dimensions that are recommended to be considered during the strategic planning process. He continues by proposing that these opportunities and threats should be an integral part of the strategies developed.

Katsiolouides (2006, p.105) introduces the “Seven-S” framework which was developed by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, consultants at McKinsey & Company. The framework can be used as a diagnostic tool for an organization’s internal environment. Moreover, it allows managing and setting direction for any organization, also nonprofit organizations. (See Figure 6)

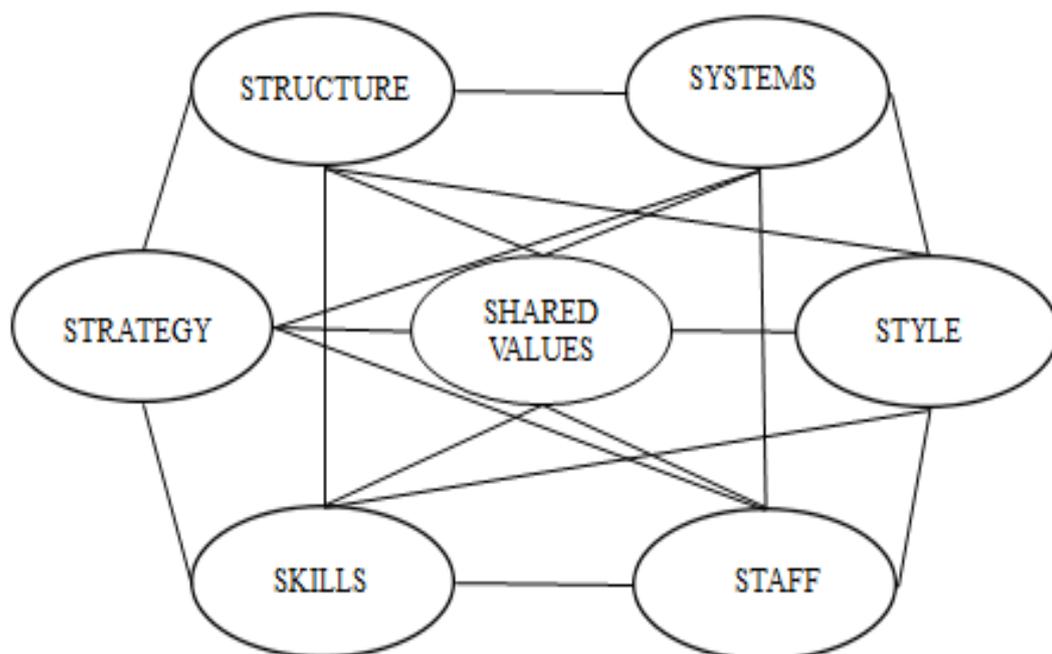


Figure 6 The McKinsey Seven-S Framework (Katsiolouides, 2006, p. 105)

The Seven-S framework is based on the theory that an organization is not just structure but consists of seven elements distinguished by *hard S's* and *soft S's*.

The hard elements –Structure, Strategy, and Systems- are practical and easily identifiable and can be found in strategy, statements, plans, charts, and so on. The four soft S's – Skills, Staff, Style, and Shared Values – are somewhat less easily distinguished and less tangibles. Constantly evolving and changing, the soft S's are determined by the people in the organization and, therefore, are complicated to anticipate or to influence. The soft S's can and do have a great impact on the hard S's of the organization. (Katsioloude, 2006, p.105).

Analyzing the organization's present stage by using appropriate tools such as SWOT- analysis or Seven-S framework is vital in forming the base for strategy creation. After this base is formed by profound analyses, the strategy formulation can begin. Cornelissen (2011, p.83) suggests that there is consensus in the process of strategy-making including the following three points:

1. Strategy formation consists of a combination of planned and emergent processes:

Strategy formation includes a combination of a logical rational process in which visions and objectives are expressed and systematically worked out into specific actions, as well as more emergent processes in which behaviors and actions simply arise.

2. Strategy involves an overall direction and not solely plans and tactics:

Strategy embodies more than just plans and tactics, which commonly have a more immediate and short-term focus. Instead, strategy concerns an organization's direction and positioning in relation to its stakeholders in environment for a longer time period.

3. Strategy is about the organization and its environment:

The emphasis for managers is to make long-term, strategic decisions that are feasible in the organization's environment. Managing strategically requires balancing the mission and vision of the organization with what the environment

allows and encourages the organization to do. In other words, a strategy is often adaptive by being responsive to external opportunities and threats.

As in organizational strategy creation, also in formulating a communication strategy, decisions concerning the objectives of the strategy need to be considered. The organizational strategy also has a vital impact on the communication strategy; thus, they should be in line (as will be explained in more detail in sub-section 2.3.3). Decisions of whether an organization wants to grow, remain stable, or renew need to be made and transformed to the communication strategy. This way the communication practices help the organization in reaching its objectives. In the following sub-section issues in planning strategic communication are discussed.

2.3.2 How to plan communication strategically?

An extensive and appropriate communication strategy plays an increasingly important role in an organization's success. Cornelissen (2011, p. 82) claims that a communication strategy involves the creation of a desired position for the organization in terms of how it wants to be seen by varying stakeholder groups. He continues by explaining that based upon an evaluation of the gap between how the organization is currently seen and how it wants to be seen (vision), a communication strategy specifies a strategic intent, on which actions are made, evaluated, and finally chosen. In order to be able to understand the gap between the desired vision and the reality, research on the organization's interest groups and their thoughts are needed, as explained already earlier in the Thesis.

The strategic intent is translated into themed messages that are designed to change and strengthen perceptions in line with the vision of how the organization wants to be known. According to Cornelissen (2011, p.89), themed messages are "messages that relate to specific capabilities, strengths or values of an organization". He claims that these messages are constantly and consistently

communicated to varying stakeholders in order to achieve the strategic intent of changing or consolidating the organization's reputation. A themed message may include an organization's specific capability, strengths, achievements or particular values associated with the organization's identity. So, themed messages are direct translations of the organization's strategic intent which, in turn, are translated into different message styles that communicate the claim about the organization's capabilities (See Figure 7).

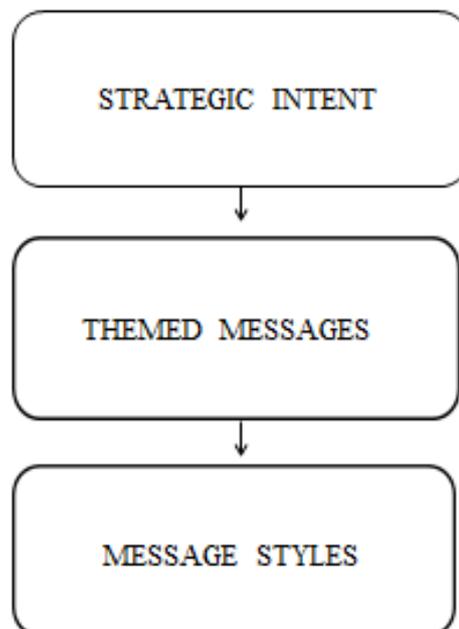


Figure 7 Stages in formulating the content of a communication strategy (Cornelissen, 2011, p. 90)

Munter (2009, p.3) divides strategic communication into five interactive stages. There are several researchers (Argenti, 2003, Windahl, et al., 1992, Samovar et al., 2006) who see the communication process in a similar way, which is why Munter's stages are included in the present Thesis (see Figure 8). Munter's communicative stages are often understood to concern bilateral communication

between two persons, but the author of this Thesis suggests that it can be extended to concern also communication between organizations and their stakeholders.

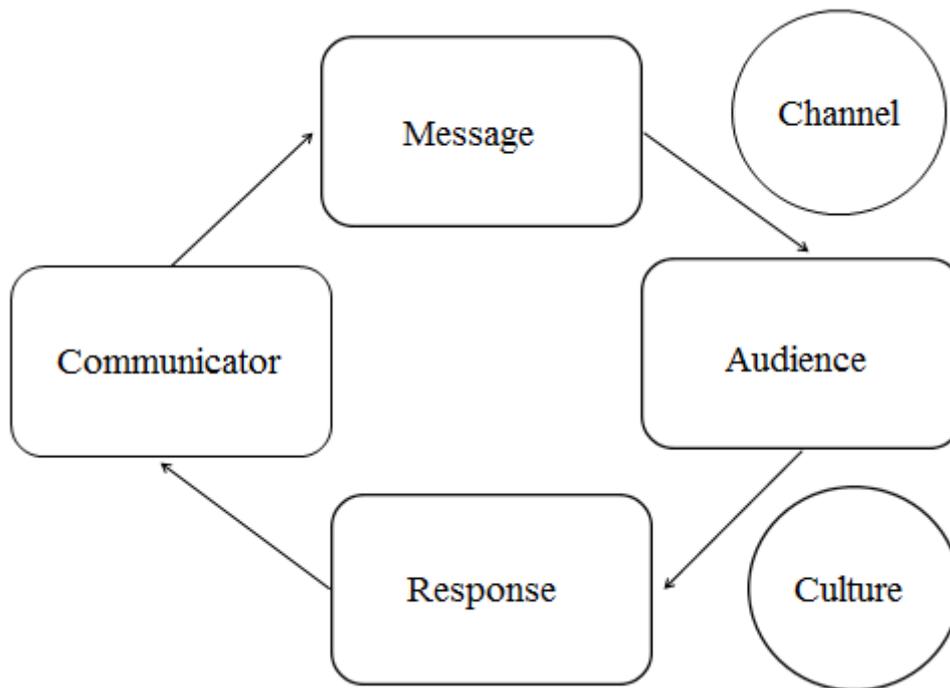


Figure 8 Communication strategy, Munter (2009, p. 3)

In Figure 8, a communicator refers to a writer or speaker and to their communicational objectives. Each communication activity strives towards these objectives by taking specific, measurable and time-bound actions (Munter, 2009, Argenti, 2003). The audience applies to the recipient of the message. Analyzing the audience is vital in order to be able to adapt communication accordingly (Munter, 2009, Argenti, 2003, Neal, 2010). Argenti (2003, p. 27) suggests that audience analysis determines who the constituencies are, and what they think and know about the organization. When planning the communication, it is central to organize the message to be as distinctive as possible. At the final stage, the end

result and response need to be analyzed. If the communicative objectives are clearly defined, the evaluation of the communication's success is easier. Culture and communication channels have an impact in the overall communication process as discussed earlier in the Thesis.

2.3.3 Communication in line with the organizational strategy

Several researchers argue that the communication strategy needs to be linked with the organization's strategy as a whole (Argenti, 2003, p. 51, Cornelissen, 2008, p.100). Using coherent communication strategy is critical regardless whether one is aiming at gaining more funding, building the organizational identity or convincing the stakeholders of the organization's accomplishments (Argenti, 2003, p.22). Cornelissen (2008, p.100) states that a communication strategy is a functional or operational strategy concerned with the possibilities to develop communication programs further towards the objectives set in the corporate strategy. He claims that the decisions made at the corporate strategy level need to be translated into specific communication programs for different stakeholders across national cultures. Cornelissen (2011, p.85) claims that business units and functions may be responsible not only for developing strategic responses to the problems and opportunities met in their own level (translating in Figure 9) but also for originating new ideas that then become the catalyst for changes in strategy throughout the whole organization (informing in Figure 9).

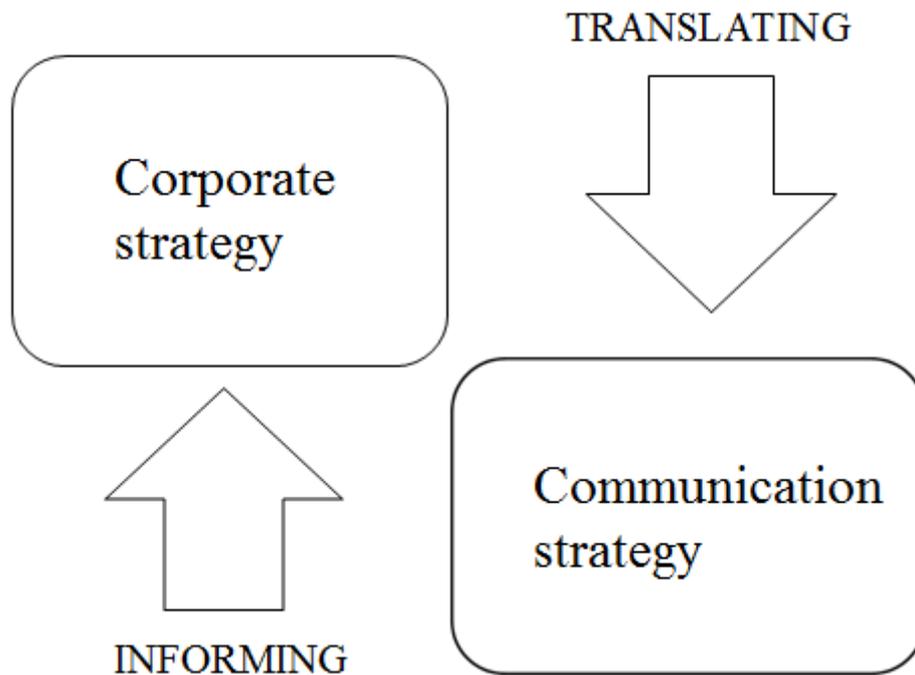


Figure 9 The link between corporate strategy and communication, Cornelissen (2008, p. 101)

Strategic communication planning is creating a framework for integrating communication into the organization in a way that supports the organizational mission. Anheier (2005, p.176) defines mission as “the principal purpose of the organization, and the very reason for its existence.” Doorley and Garcia (2007, p. 287) suggest that while developing a strategic communication plan, the organization’s environment, strategy, individuals, messages, media, measurement and feedback, structure and staffing, and budget have to be analyzed. Meade (2010) adds that when implementing a communication plan, deadlines should be established and enforced so that the employees could prioritize their appraisal and provide feedback.

As explained in this section, strategic communication and planning are essential for effective and efficient communication. Tourish and Hargie (2004, p.7) claim

that research findings suggest that effective management of communication is beneficial for organizations. However, it is obvious that this requires management focus and prioritizing, as effective and efficient communication does not take place by itself. Using a coherent communication strategy is crucial as Argenti (2003, p. 22) also says.

2.3.4 The importance of knowing your stakeholders

Recently, organizations have realized that they need to communicate with numerous stakeholder groups successfully in order to avoid certain groups from raising issues that could potentially be damaging for the organization's reputation (Cornelissen, 2008, p. 37). Thus, communication is as much about informing and leading discussion about issues close to organization, as it is about suppressing issues an organization wants to keep out of the public debate. Cornelissen (2011, p. 39) suggests that stakeholder management, more than any other subject, has profound implications for organizational communication. It requires that managers think strategically about their operations overall and about how they can effectively communicate with stakeholders, including customers, investors, employees and members of communities in which the organization operates.

A standard definition of a stakeholder is the one provided by Edward Freeman and introduced by Cornelissen (2011, p. 42): "A stakeholder is any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's purpose and objectives." Courtney (2002, p. 150) agrees with this by claiming that stakeholders are, "All those who are affected by the activities of the organization or who have expectations of the organization." Furthermore, Katsioloudes (2006, p.21) suggests that stakeholders are those individuals or organizations who are influenced by or have an influence, direct or indirect, on the organization's operations.

Cornelissen (2011, p. 44) argues that managers commonly start analyzing and identifying the organization's stakeholders, their influence and interest in the organization. This way they have a more clear idea of the stakeholders' information needs, the positions they hold in relation to the organization, and an appropriate communication strategy to maintain support or counter opposition. For that reason it is crucial to research the present and potential stakeholder groups in order to be able to plan an organization's communication practices accordingly. Vuokko (2003, p.31) suggests that charities' potential target groups and needs for marketing purposes are:

- Members (activating, engaging)
- Targets of the activities and their families (telling about the activities)
- Funders (gaining the financial funding)
- Donors (gaining the donations)
- Voluntary workers (getting more people to join)
- Decision makers (bringing out the organization's issues)

According to Courtney (2002), a stakeholder analysis concerns both internal and external players who have views about the internal as well as the external matters of the organization. Cornelissen (2008, p. 49) suggests that an organization's stakeholder model should identify each stakeholder group and they must be addressed for the stake that they hold. Vuokko (2003, p.46) claims that the value that each stakeholder group has for the organization should be measured in order to be able to treat each stakeholder group according to its value. However, Vuokko does not offer any means or tools to measure the value.

Cornelissen (2011, p. 45) introduces the following questions to help the stakeholder identification analysis. He suggests that answering to these questions captures the essential information for effective stakeholder communication:

- Who are the organization's stakeholders?
- What are their stakes?
- What opportunities and challenges are presented to the organization in relation to these stakeholders?
- What responsibilities (economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic) does the organization have to all its stakeholders?
- In what way can the organization best communicate with and respond to these stakeholders and address these stakeholder challenges and opportunities?

Satisfied stakeholders are lifeline and vital condition for all organizations. If the stakeholders are not content, the organization cannot be successful. Knowing who the stakeholders are and adapting the organizational operations accordingly is extremely significant. Jones (2008, p. 31) proposes that stepping to the stakeholder's shoes is necessary in order to succeed in the communication.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In Chapter 3, the theoretical framework of the Thesis is presented. The purpose of the theoretical framework is to guide the research process and sum up the theoretical and analytical elements significant for this study. The framework is designed by combining the most essential elements discussed in the literature review.

The communicator-message-receiver-response-circle in the theoretical framework (see Figure 10) is adopted from Munter's (2009, p.3) communication strategy (see Figure 8). It is, however, modified to fit the case organization of this study. From the framework, one can see how an NPO's communication is constructed and which elements have an impact on it. In the present Thesis, the framework is applied for both internal and external communication.

OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT, COMMITMENT TO THE NPO

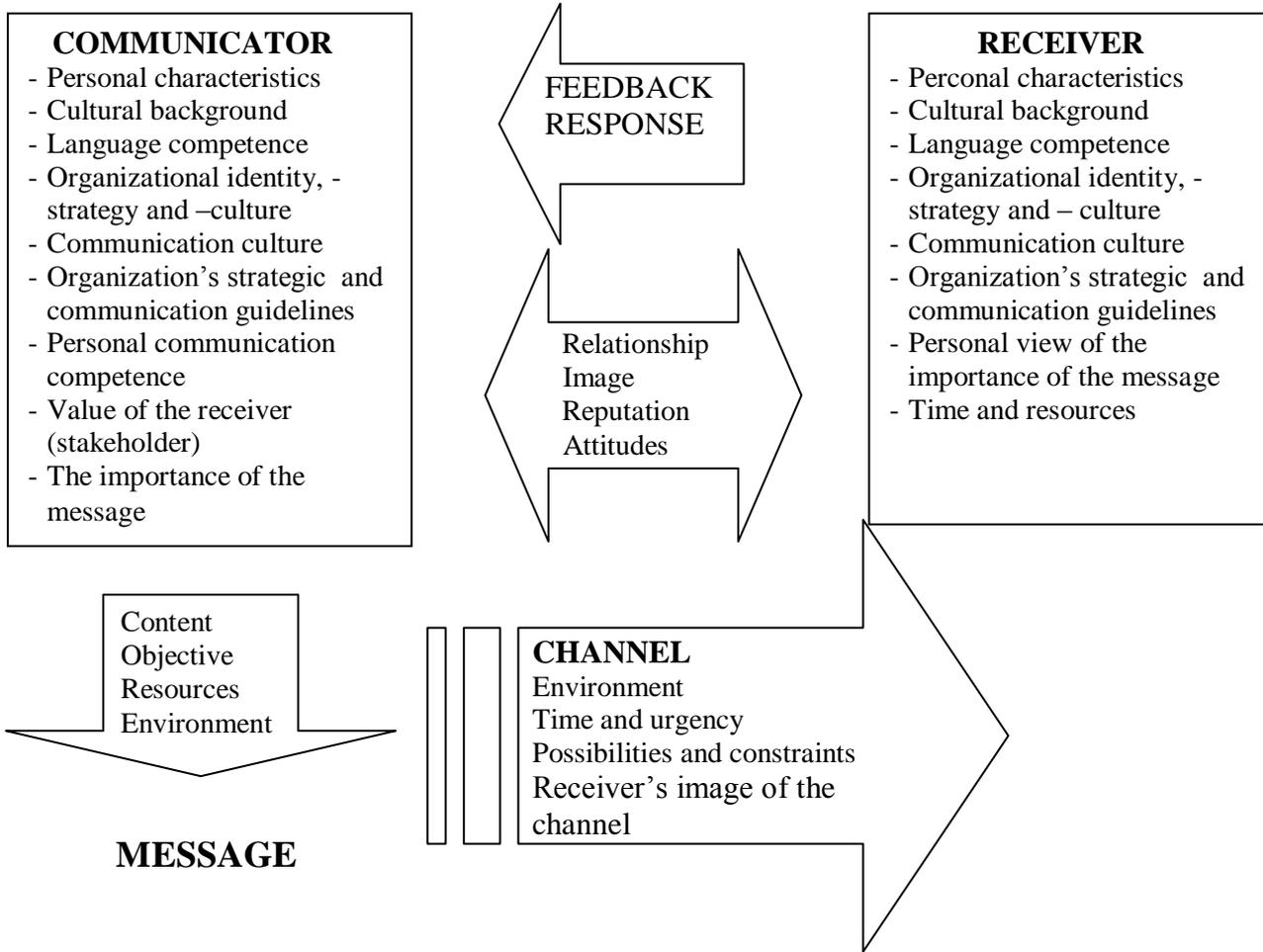


Figure 10 Theoretical framework: Communication flow in an international NPO

In communication, there is always a communicator and a receiver. The communicator sends a message, through a channel to the receiver, who then gives feedback by responding to the message in one way or another. This is the basic circle of communication presented already by Munter (see section 2.3). Nonetheless, communication is in practice more complex and several matters need to be taken into account.

Communication starts from the communicator who wants to send a message to the receiver. The communicator’s personal characteristics, cultural background, language and communication competencies, organizational identity, -strategy, and –culture,

communication culture as well as possible strategic and communication guidelines coming from the organizational side may have an impact on how the communication is structured. Also how valuable the receiver i.e. the stakeholder is for the communicator or for the organization and how important the message is may have an influence on how the communicator acts.

The communicator forms the message addressed to the receiver. The desired end result and the content of the message as well as the resources available may have an impact on how the message is formulated. The external environment including security issues characteristic for developing areas, in the context of the present Thesis, also need to be considered when structuring the message. The resources available may set restrictions on the formation of the messaging as well.

After the message has been structured, it is sent to the receiver through a channel. There is often a variety of channels available from which the communicator chooses the most appropriate one. The external environment with its possibilities and constraints has an influence on the channel decision. Also the constraints and limitation concerning the receiver's technological readiness to receive messages through the chosen channel as well as the urgency of the message, needs to be considered. The receiver's relation to the chosen channel is also worth investigating as it may influence for instance the credibility of the message.

The message may be received and interpreted in various ways. The receiver's personal characteristics, cultural background, and language competence may have an influence on the understanding and the interpretation of the message. Also the receiver's view of the importance of the message, the communication culture, the potential organizational identity, strategy, principles and guidelines, and time and resources available have a great influence on how the message is understood and interpreted.

After the receiver's interpretation, feedback is sent back to the communicator in a form of an answer or action. Responding to the messages can happen in various ways. Even if

no response is given, it can be understood as feedback. After the circle of communication is closed, the communicator can evaluate whether the communication was successful and whether the desired response was received. If the intended outcome of the communication was not reached, gaining feedback enables improving the communication practices.

The communicator's and the receiver's potential personal relationships, image, attitudes and reputation of each other may have an influence on how the message is interpreted and how they respond to it. The operational environment and a communicator's and receiver's commitment to the NPO have a major impact on the overall communication flow.

The theoretical framework presented above may be applicable also for other organizations than NPOs. However, it is constructed by keeping in mind the special characteristics and conditions of NPO's communication. The significance of each phase of the communication process presented in the framework changes depending on the characteristics of an organization. For instance in an internationally dispersed NPO such as the case organization of the study, the cultural background, linguistic challenges, organizational identity and –strategy, communication culture, operating environment with its constraints, and limited resources play a major role in forming the communication. In a pure for-profit company different aspect may be more significant in forming communications.

4 METHODS AND DATA

Chapter 4 introduces the methods and data collection tools used in this study and justifies them. Section 4.1. discusses the research methods used in the Thesis. Section 4.2. presents the data collection process, and in section 4.3. the analysis of the data is explained. Section 4.4. discusses the trustworthiness of the study.

4.1 Research methods

As the objective of the present study is to explore an internationally operating NPO's communication practices and give recommendations for developing communication plans for their globally dispersed field offices, a qualitative single case study was adopted to be the research method. The following sub-section discusses the characteristics of the research method and gives justifications for choosing this particular approach. Also semi-structured interviews as a data collection tool will be presented.

4.1.1 Single case design

This study is a qualitative single case study of an NPO, Finn Church Aid (FCA). It is a natural choice for the Thesis as the aim of the empirical part is to understand a single organization's communication practices. A case study is defined as follows:

“The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result.” (Schramm cited by Yin, 2009, p.17)

In this research qualitative methods are used. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005, p.111) claim that when an event or social process is difficult to study with quantitative methods, qualitative research may be suitable and can provide profound details

and understanding. They continue by mentioning that qualitative methods to research are common in social and behavioral sciences, and among researchers who want to understand human behavior and functions. Bryman and Bell (2003) suggest that most qualitative researchers try to see through the eyes of the research participants. In this case as the employees are interviewed in order to understand FCA's current communicational situation and gain insights of the employees' opinions and views of what is currently working and what is not, the use of qualitative methods is justifiable.

4.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interview is one of the most common methods of getting information (Hirsijärvi & Hurme, 2008, Ruusuvaori & Tiittula, 2005, Yin, 2009, p.106). According to Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2008), interview as a method fits for varying purposes because of its flexibility. Maylor and Blackmon (2005, p.227) suggest that "In a qualitative interview, you do not go in with an interview schedule with precisely worded questions in a strict order." Interviews are rather guided conversations than structured queries (Yin, 2009, p.106, Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, p. 85). According to Eskola and Suoranta (1998, p.85), interviews are interaction between two parties that influence each other.

Meade (2010) proposes that the first step in developing a strategic plan for internal communication is to review the present state of the communication. Thus, in this thesis, semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate information collection method as the aim was to study the current state of the field offices' communication, identify possible challenges, and based on this knowledge, create further guidelines for improving their communication practices (See Appendix 1). In order to gain a profound image of the situation today, FCA's employees working in different positions and locations were interviewed.

Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2008) suggest that questions and themes of the interview should be planned so that the information that is searched for will be received. The interview situations in the present study were fairly informal, free-form discussions led by predesigned themes and questions. The interview questions used were modified depending on the situation and the interviewees' earlier responses. Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2008), however, believe that one weakness in interview as a method is the impact of the interviewer. Even though the interviewer makes efforts not to lead the interview towards a certain direction, he/she always has an impact.

4.2 Research data

The empirical research for this Thesis was conducted in January - March 2011. The research data were gathered from nine semi-structured individual face-to-face interviews and one email interview. In total, ten FCA employees with varying job descriptions and work experiences were interviewed. As mentioned in sub-section 1.1.1., FCA has offices in Africa, Haiti, Asia, and Finland; the interviewees came from the headquarters as well as from the field offices were interviewed (see Table 1).

At the beginning of the empirical research, all interviewees were contacted through email. The Thesis topic and the objective of the study were introduced to them and interview times and locations were arranged. An interview invitation was sent via email to twelve persons in total of whom ten agreed to be interviewed.

4.2.1 Selection of the interviewees

The interviewee candidates were chosen carefully according to the recommendations gained mostly from the contact person in FCA's communications department but also from other employees. The interviewees

from FCA headquarters represent a wide range of people with varying job description and relations with the field offices. The precondition for being a suitable candidate for the research was that the interviewee took part of the regular cooperation and communication between the headquarters and the field offices.

Three representatives (REPs) from the field offices were interviewed in order to understand their needs, views and working conditions better. They were chosen based on FCA's communications manager's recommendations. Two of these interviews were conducted in Helsinki during their visit on 15 March 2011. One of the field representatives was contacted via email. However, the answers received from her were fairly extensive. In Table 1, the interview settings are presented.

Table 1 Interviews

Interview number	Title	Location of the person	Interview type	Date of the interview
Kick-off meeting	Director of Communications and Head of Communications	Helsinki	Face-to-face	October 2010
1.	Director of International Co-operation	Helsinki	Face-to-face	14 th January 2011
2.	Director of Organization Development	Helsinki	Face-to-face	14 th January 2011
3.	Africa Unit: Head of Unit	Helsinki	Face-to-face	25 th January 2011
4.	Field Presence Manager	Helsinki	Face-to-face	26 th January 2011
5.	Head of Communications	Helsinki	Face-to-face	24 th February 2011
6.	Director of Administration	Helsinki	Face-to-face	11 th March 2011
7.	Asia, Middle East, Europe, Latin America and Caribbean Unit: Head of Unit	Helsinki	Face-to-face	24 th March 2011
8.	Haiti's Country Office: Country Representative	Haiti	Face-to-face	15 th March 2011
9.	East Africa's Region Office, Kenya: Regional Representative	Kenya	Face-to-face	15 th March 2011
10.	Congo's Country Office, Middle Africa: Field Coordinator	Kongo	Email	24 th March 2011

4.2.2 Interview situations

Face-to-face interviews were preferred in the research but due to time limitations and long distance, one interview had to be carried out through email.

The aim was to conduct the interviews in a peaceful and quiet environment. Most of the interviews were held in the case organization's headquarters in a meeting room or a private office where the interviewee was alone with the interviewer. However, three were completed in a cafeteria or hotel premises where there were other people present. Yet, these circumstances did not have a significant influence on the interview situation or on the results.

The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, varying between 30 minutes and 60 minutes. They were held in Finnish as it was all interviewees' mother tongue. The interviewer had preplanned questions and themes for the interview but it was fairly common that the interviewee discussed some of the topics already before the questions were asked. In such situations, the predesigned course of the interview was modified, and the same themes were not handled again. Additional questions also occasionally emerged on the way, based on the answers and topics of the interviews.

4.2.3 Interview documentation

All face-to-face interviews were recorded with the interviewees' permission. According to Ruusuvuori and Tiittula (2005), recording interviews has often more benefits than damage. Bryman and Bell (2003, p.353) claim that in qualitative research, it is common that the interviews are recorded and transcribed later. This way the interviewer can concentrate on leading the discussion and not on making extensive notes.

In this research, the interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview situations to be able to recall the discussions better. The interviews were transcribed word by word first in Finnish. However, insignificant pauses, expletives, or tones were not written down as the focus of the research was the content of the interviews and not the way of expression. After completing the documentation of the interviews, they were translated into English. All citations presented later in the Thesis are translations by the author.

4.2.4 Termination of the interview process

The interview process was decided to be completed after ten interviews because of two reasons: the limited resources and gaining the saturation point.

Firstly, the time frame in which the research findings had to be presented to FCA's communication department was rigid. The communication department needed the results in order to be able to continue developing the actual communication plans based on the study. Also FCA's employees' time and resources were limited and no other candidate names emerged when asking for suggestions for other potential interviewees. Twelve persons were contacted for the interview of whom two did not reply.

The second reason for the termination of the interview process was that in the final interviews, no more significant new information that had not already been mentioned in the previous interviews came up. According to Eskola and Suoranta (1998, p.62-63), the researcher has enough data when the *saturation* point is reached i.e. new interviews do not give any additional, relevant information for the research. Eskola and Suoranta (1998, p.63) argue that the saturation point cannot be determined beforehand but always depends on the particular study and the interviews.

Section 4.2. has so far discussed the research methods used in the present Thesis. The following sub-section will present the data analysis process to be able to explore and answer the theme questions.

4.2.5 Analyzing the data

The analysis of qualitative data may be complex and infinite (Maylor and Blackmon, 2005, p.348). The data analysis for this Thesis is based on the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3. In the theoretical framework the various phases of communication flow are presented and the framework enables structured analysis of the data. As Maylor and Blackmon (2005, p.351) claim, in structured analysis of qualitative data, the findings can be compared with a conceptual framework based on previous research and the researcher's views. Furthermore, the framework helps to guide the analysis and interpretations but also allows identifying aspects that differ from previous research. Yin (2003, p. 112) also suggests that theoretical propositions for causal relations and providing answers to *how* and *why* questions may help in structuring the analyzing process.

The data analysis process was started by structuring the data according the three research questions and themes presented in Chapter 1: issues concerning internal communication, external communication, and the operational environment. After this, the data was analyzed through with the help of the theoretical framework.

4.3 Trustworthiness of the study

This section discusses the quality and trustworthiness of the present Thesis. According to Eskola and Suoranta (1998, p.210), in a qualitative study the primary criteria for trustworthiness of the study lie in the research process itself. Eskola and Suoranta (1998) claim that the researcher plays a significant role in the process as all the results are researcher's own interpretations. It is vital to remember that even though the findings reflect the interviewees' responses and

perceptions, they are always deciphered by the interviewer and are a result of an interaction between several persons. Hence, it is vital to give justifications of the research methods to build trustworthiness for the study.

Bryman and Bell (2003, p.287-288) introduce the concepts of *validity* and *reliability* to be significant in trustworthy research. Although these two concepts are mostly used to measure trustworthiness of a quantitative research, they can also be applied to qualitative study. Validity indicates how accurately the research has been conducted (Maylor & Blackmon, 2005, p.158). In other words, as Bryman and Bell (2003, p.287-288) claim, validity refers to whether the researcher is observing and investigating what was intended. According to Maylor and Blackmon (2005, p.159), reliability on the other hand, means that another researcher would reach the same findings if the same study was repeated. It indicates the degree to which the study can be replicated.

Validity is carefully considered in this study. As the objective of the current Thesis was to identify and describe the international case organization's dispersed communication practices, the interviewees as well as the themes of the discussions were carefully chosen and planned in order to ensure gaining an extensive and truthful overview of the current situation. The interviewees represented a variety of FCA's employees with different responsibilities. Furthermore, the interview themes were structured in a way that all aspects of FCA's internal and external communications relevant for the field offices were covered. Defining the key concepts of the Thesis and clearly articulating the objective of the study to the interviewees played a crucial role in creating a common understanding of the research subject.

The *reliability* of the study is also fairly high. The interviews were conducted during a two months' time period. The reason for such a short empirical data collection time was to ensure that the interviewees' knowledge of the topic and the external environment remained as stable as possible. To guarantee the

necessary reliability for this study, the interviews were reported by taking extensive supportive notes and all original documentation is saved. This made it possible for the researcher to return to the materials and analyze it again whenever needed.

Furthermore, *credibility* is claimed to be a vital factor in making research findings trustworthy and of high quality. Credibility refers to verifying that the investigator understands and interprets the topic in a similar way to interviewees (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Bryman and Bell (2003, p.363) recommend to present evidence to support any argument made, including quotations from a variety of sources. When the findings of the Thesis are discussed, quotations from the interviews will be presented. For the reasons discussed above, a single case study utilizing semi-structured interviews is a justifiable and appropriate method for this study.

5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings from the empirical study of the Thesis. The findings are based on nine individual face-to-face interviews and one email interview conducted with FCA's employees working both in the field and in the headquarters in Helsinki. As the objective of the study is to create guidelines for developing a communication plan for each field office, it was found necessary to first examine the current state of the field offices' communication practices. In order to gain a profound understanding of the current situation, it was justifiable to interview representatives from the field as well as from the headquarters.

The findings chapter begins by giving an overview of the role of communication in FCA's operation. In the three sections that follow, answers to the research questions of the study are provided:

- How do FCA's employees perceive the challenges in the organization's internal communications?
- How do FCA's employees perceive the field offices' external communication and the possibilities to develop it?
- What is the impact of the operating environment (i.e. developing countries) on FCA's communications?

According to the research questions, section 5.2 examines the field offices' internal communication with the headquarters, section 5.3 discusses the current situation of field offices' external communication, and section 5.4 concentrates on FCA's operating environment and on how it affects communication possibilities and practices. It is worth mentioning that there is a wide variety of cultural and area specific features, depending on where each field office is situated. These cultural characteristics cannot be generalized and, need to be taken into account separately when conducting the actual communication plans. In section 5.6, the

future prospects and potential challenges for the field offices will be discussed. Finally, section 5.7 summarizes the findings.

5.1 The role of communications in FCA's operations

At the moment as FCA's field offices are recently established and still under development, attention has not yet been paid to communicative practices. According to Quirke (1996) poor communication is sabotaging efforts for change and, therefore, efficient communication is vital to make change happen inside an organization. Because FCA as an organization is constantly changing and it is not yet clear what the shape will be in five or ten years, it is important to keep in mind the importance of communication in this change process. This Thesis is to serve that need.

The interviewees acknowledge the importance of communications. All interviewees mentioned that communications are vital for FCA to operate successfully, professionally and in a well-organized way. Interviewee number 5 stated that, *"In order to get the benefit out of them [the field offices], both internal and external communications are extremely important."* Nonetheless, while the importance of communications has been acknowledged among FCA's employees, it is still considered as a secondary issue.

The reason for prioritizing other tasks can be explained by the lack of resources. At present, in most of the field offices, no resources are directed to communications nor is it included in anyone's job description. However, communications are a vital enabler for co-operation between the field and the headquarters as well as for conducting operations successfully in the field. This is also demonstrated in previous research by Courtney (2002) who suggests that collaboration is extremely important for nongovernmental organizations in order to achieve their visions of social change. In FCA, commonly the head of each field office, called the representative (REP), is responsible for the

communications but due to other responsibilities and priorities, no time or resources remain for appropriately taking care of the communication.

The interviewees have acknowledged the communication weaknesses that take place in FCA, but no action to improve the situation, has been taken. This may be due to lack of understanding the communicational objectives and, consequently, prioritizing other tasks. According to the interviewees, communication is not efficient, and shortages in organization, coordination and systematic communication exist. Communications are considered to cause additional work as resources are limited, guidelines insufficient, and knowledge in communication practices is lacking. Interviewee number 1 mentioned that, *“We have to remember that people who are there [in the field] do not necessarily have the same level of knowledge about communications. Building capacity and educating people could be implemented in order to give them better ability [to communicate].”* At the moment, there are no communications professionals in the field, except temporarily in Haiti’s field office. Needs for well-organized strategic communication and additional resources are evitable, exemplified by interviewee number 8’s answer stating that, *“At least two hours every morning is spent in sending emails, sometimes it takes the whole day [while the actual work remains undone]. It’s not very efficient.”*

As mentioned in section 2.3, an organization’s communication needs to be in line with the organization’s core strategy as a whole (Argenti, 2003, Cornelissen, 2008). Hargie et al. (2002, p. 415) claim that effective communications are vital to business success, and should be an integral part of the strategic planning process for any organization. According to the interviews, FCA has a clear vision where the organization is heading to, and it is explicitly communicated throughout the organization. This enables consistent communications. However, when asked about FCA’ target image or communicative objectives, varying answers were received. Interviewee number 5 claimed that, *“these [the objectives or the target*

image] did not become concrete and it was not clear what they meant in practice.”

The importance of efficient communications are inevitable for FCA's success. Due to the recently established organizational structure, dispersed operations and challenging operating environment, its significance is even more emphasized. In the following section, FCA's field offices' internal communications with the headquarters is discussed.

5.2 Internal communication culture across borders and time zones

According to O'Connor and Szukala (2001), the importance of effective internal communication cannot be overstated. Therefore, this section discusses internal communications between the headquarters and the field, and provides answers to the first research question of the study. By the term "internal communications" the present author refers solely to communications flow between Helsinki and the field. Communication within the field offices is excluded from this study as the offices still are fairly small, each consisting of two to nine persons and their communication is, according to the interviews, mostly interpersonal, face-to-face communication and, therefore, working well. Also Helsinki headquarters' internal communication is left out from the study as the objective of the Thesis is to develop guidelines for creating a communications plan specifically for the field offices. The findings presented below are based on the interviewees' perceptions of the topic.

FCA's decentralized organizational structure and environmental restrictions cause challenges for FCA's communications. Long distance, different time zones, communication channels, cultural features, varying language competences, and restrictions in internet connections may cause additional challenges and misunderstandings to communication. In case of occasional poor internet

connections, there is no optional planned or coordinated manner to share information and files in FCA.

However, according to the interviews, a positive attitude and good internal atmosphere within FCA facilitates communication in general between the field offices and the headquarters. It was mentioned by several interviewees that people try to help each other, which enhances the smooth flow of internal communication. Despite of all the challenges mentioned above, the interviewees claimed that communication between Helsinki headquarters and the field offices is regular and working fairly well, though improvements in coordination of the communication and in its efficiency are needed. Interviewee number 2 claimed that *“It (the internal communication and how it works) depends on a person and how active he or she is.”*

Resources are wasted in disorganized and inefficient communication, and in the worst scenario, the information does not even reach the people for whom it is targeted. As there are no guidelines for internal communications in FCA, a lot of time and effort is spent to reassure that all the people concerned, are informed. Due to insufficient organization and coordination of the internal communications, some people may purely be forgotten to be informed or an important email is lost in the masses of irrelevant emails. Even though communications with the field offices goes mostly through Head of Unit, there is an overload of emails coming also from different directions and units of the headquarters. According to some of the interviews, the extent of information and emails, and on the other hand the limited time and resources reserved for internal communications, may result in a way that the information does not reach the receiver. Another challenging issue is the changing organizational structure. Employees’ responsibilities change constantly, therefore communication planning and tracking of the responsibilities can be difficult.

Having one contact person in Helsinki was mentioned by the REPs to limit the number of emails, and was perceived as an efficient way of communicating. In order to try to limit the challenge of the extensive amount of emails discussed above, the majority of the communications at present happens between the REP in the field and Head of Unit in Helsinki. Meade (2010) proposes that regularity in communication is considered to be crucial as nothing destroys trust faster than rumors. The REPs and Head of the Unit have weekly Skype meetings, monthly reports and irregular but active exchange of emails. Head of Unit acts as a link between the field and the rest of the headquarters. The majority of the field office REPs considered this way of cooperating and communicating satisfactory. Nevertheless, interviewee number 3 claimed that having only one contact person as a link between the field and the headquarters is not necessarily an ideal situation due to potential misunderstandings, dependency and workload.

Regular communication and face-to-face meetings play a vital role in creating the feeling of togetherness, sharing information and developing good internal atmosphere. According to Welch et al. (2001), the increasingly complex operations cause managerial challenges of how to keep together dispersed activities so that a large organization can operate internationally as a single entity. FCA is in this kind of challenging situation. According to the interviewees, weekly Skype meetings and monthly reports were considered to be valuable means in sharing information. However, also face-to-face meetings and interpersonal contacts were considered crucial in maintaining the feeling of togetherness and working for one, common organization. FCA organizes twice a year a face-to-face meeting for the REPs and the employees in the headquarters. The sense of not being part of the same community as the people in Helsinki came up from the interviews with the REPs. This may be due to long physical distance and inconsistent communication patterns. Some of the REPs also felt that people in the headquarters do not understand the special features and the working conditions peculiar for the field. This was, however, to some extent understood as well in the headquarters as the citation of interviewee number 7 exemplifies, “I

guess people in there [in the field] think that we [the headquarters] do not realize the impact of the local context and the challenges it causes. And how much it [the context] needs to be taken into account while working.”

Many critical success factors depend on internal communication: efficient operations and utilization of resources, motivation of employees and affinity between the employees, the behavior of individuals, all are extensively influenced by the internal flow of information. Especially in FCA’s situation where people and operations are geographically situated far from each other, well-functioning internal communication plays a crucial role. In the following sub-section, the communication channels used in FCA’s internal communication are discussed.

5.2.1 Internal communication channels in FCA

No organization could operate nor communicate without appropriate communication channels. Meade (2010) suggests that it is vital to consistently use formal channels to keep the members informed. Communication channels are especially fundamental for FCA due to the geographical dispersion. When asked whether the channels are appropriate for FCA, it was mentioned that occasionally, the environment sets constraints for instance in breaking network connections, but in general the interviewees were fairly content with the channels and tools available. In the following, the internal communication channels and their characteristics in FCA’s field offices are discussed.

Email

Email is a widely used communication channel in FCA. According to the interviews, it is one of the most commonly used tools to share information. As presented also in previous literature on the topic, Tourish and Hargie (2004, p. 83) claim that email has been one of the most remarkable offshoots from the internet. They suggest that the major benefit of email is that it enables an instant transfer of messages and documents.

Email has partly replaced telephone and written communication in international organizations such as FCA. The use of email as a channel for communication was claimed to be slower compared to other channels. Interviewee number 1 mentioned that, *“A matter that could be easily handled through a short Skype conversation, may take ten emails.”* On the other hand, the possibility to track conversations was considered a positive feature among interviewees.

Hewitt (2006) suggests that an increased use of emails may also lead to information overload in mail boxes and an excessive dependence on technology at the expense of face-to-face communication and interpersonal relations. This has happened in FCA as the majority of communication between the field offices and the headquarters in Helsinki is conducted by email and Skype. There again, long physical distance partly explains this phenomenon.

Hewitt (2006) argues that the benefits email has as a medium, have also been debated by arguing that it lacks the ability to convey situational cues. This came up also in some of the interviews as it was mentioned that misunderstandings and mis-interpretations easily happen because of the varying styles of expression through email. Emails leave space for ambiguity due to not seeing the other person's facial expressions, gestures or hearing the tone of a message. Some of the interviewees claimed that because of the lack of time, messaging is often short and concise. It was mentioned that there is no time to think of styling or write compliments. As a consequence, misunderstandings in interpreting the tone of a message may occur. Interviewee number 1 claimed that, *“Email is one communication tool but it is not a very good one since it is fairly slow, misunderstandings arise easily, and written communication is always different from verbal communication. On the other hand when communicating via email, it is good that there is documentation of the communication”*.

According to the research introduced in Hewitt's (2006) article, possible obstacles in email usage are the distribution lists that are not up-to-date. This is the situation

of FCA because of the email culture in the organization. As the allocation of the organizational responsibilities is vague and constantly changing, and communications are unorganized, a large number of respondents are included in the email posting lists. In consequence, people receive a lot of irrelevant information and a relevant message may be left without attention.

Skype

Skype was mentioned to be one of the most common communication channels between the field and the headquarters in Helsinki. It was claimed to be cost-efficient and fairly well functioning. However, the areas where FCA operates, set challenges for instance in form of uncertain internet connections. It was mentioned in the interviews that picture and voice rarely work at the same time therefore, Skype meetings are often held without the picture.

Skype was mentioned to be a crucial communication tool especially between Head of the Unit in Helsinki and the REP. Interviewee number 7 explained that Skype meetings are held approximately once a week and they last roughly one hour. The goal is to reserve enough time for the discussion but often the time runs short and some important issues may be excluded. Interviewee number 7 raised an idea of an agenda, i.e. a list of matters to be dealt with, for the weekly Skype meetings.

Telephone

The usage of telephone has been decreasing due to more cost-efficient communication channels such as email and Skype. According to the interviews, telephone is used in cases when neither email nor Skype is functioning.

Intranet

Intranets play an important role in facilitating many organizations' internal communication. Doorley and Garcia (2007) argue that while the external focus is important, the internal site or the intranet is equally significant. It is a central place

from where people find information and where they share it. It is also considered to be a suitable place for sharing unofficial information such as news about the personnel. An important factor according to Doorley and Garcia (2007) is to keep the content of an intranet current. It is a shared place that, at its best, unites employees in an organization. As Tourish and Hargie (2004, p.82) also claim, the intranet flattens the organizational structure and introduces 'any-to-any' connectivity within an organization and, therefore, facilitates increased cooperation among employees. They continue by stating that the increased information flow, due to the use of intranet, may lead to strategic advantages such as improved decision making and innovation.

FCA has an intranet called Kuopeli where a lot of information concerning the organization's internal matters are shared. Kuopeli's usage rate varies a lot among the employees. According to the interviews, FCA's intranet is claimed not to be very user-friendly and, consequently information is hard to find. The possibility to access it in the field also varies due to the inconsistent internet connections. In these situations, most of the information is later sent to the field via emails, but often problems appear while large files attached to the emails are opened. Klein (1994) claims that whichever channel is chosen for communication, the possibility to access to it among all stakeholders in question should be guaranteed. How to enable equal access to all information also in the field is a real challenge for FCA.

Face-to-face

Klein (1994) argues that face-to-face communication is the most effective way to communicate due to its immediacy and interaction. Clutterbuck and James (1996) agree with this by proposing that majority of the communication should be face-to-face and originate from trusted sources. However, in FCA, face-to-face communication is somewhat challenging between the field offices and the headquarters in Helsinki due to long physical distances. In order to enable interpersonal relations and sharing of ideas, FCA organizes face-to-face meetings for the REPs and the personnel in Helsinki 2-3 times a year. This is considered to

be important also in developing and maintaining the feeling of togetherness and community.

Satellite phone in cases of emergency

FCA has the possibility to use satellite phone calls for urgent communication in cases of emergency. This is not, however, a regular communication tool.

5.3 FCA's external communications in the field

This section provides answer to the second research question by describing the employees' perceptions of the field offices' external communication and its possibilities to develop it. As explained in the literature review, in the present Thesis, external communications are defined as any communications that are targeted for the stakeholders outside the organization. So, marketing communications are a part of external communications.

FCA's field offices have not yet paid much attention to their external or marketing communications even though its importance on raising funds and awareness have been realized among employees. So the communications have not been planned nor given resources for. According to O'Connor and Szukala (2001), external communication is two-way interaction between an organization and its numerous publics. As presented in the literature review, Vuokko (2004) argues that marketing communications can also be adapted to organizations whose primary goal is not to make profit. The interviewees agree with this by claiming that increasing awareness among varying stakeholders in the areas where FCA operates, play an important role in gaining funding and credibility for the organization. Interviewee number 7 mentioned that "*Communications are extremely important for funding, especially for international funding.*" Interviewee number 5 explained that, "*the message sent through the local media is primarily directed for funders. That way we [FCA] raise awareness and credibility.*" Interviewee number 5 continues by arguing that, "*If no one knows*

us, no one will invest in us.” It was also claimed that *“We need to earn credibility through visible operations.”* Thus, external communications are needed in order to raise awareness, influence and bring about actions.

FCA has many internal and external stakeholder groups. However, a research and analyses on the topic is necessary to be conducted separately for each field office as the following citation by interviewee number 1 presents: *“While developing the field offices’ web pages, it needs to be carefully considered for whom the pages are primarily directed for, whether it is for the Finnish publics or the international audiences. (...) The content of the pages varies to some extent depending on this.”*

According to the interviewees, as no planned or intended external communication exists in the field and the organization is still fairly small and unknown in the areas it operates, the field offices’ external image pretty much equals the image of its employees at the moment. This might be risky as their external communications are to no extent controlled or well-designed. According to Vuokko (2004, p.167), it is good to remember that all aspects of an organization communicate; name, field, services provided, way of action, the target group, location, the behavior of its employees, and facilities. Thus, strong opinions and reactions may arise even without planned marketing communication (Vuokko, 2004, p. 167). This should be acknowledged in FCA.

Marketing communications materials need to be adapted according to the target audience and operating habits in a specific area, and providing them should be included as a natural part of the employees’ tasks. According to the interviewees, traditional public relations, media relationship management, campaigns, articles, news sheets, personal relations, and briefings are considered to be important means to enhance external communication and to reach the favorable external image. Ensuring professional external communications, systematic and organized communication practices and delivery of external communication materials were

also mentioned to be important in the interviews. This way, people in the field would consider providing marketing materials such as pictures, videos, case stories as a natural part of their job description. As interviewee number 1 suggested, *“Marketing communication should be considered and planned from the beginning. (...) Some structure and system should be created for marketing communication. So that our people in the field would consider producing marketing materials as a natural part of their job. (...) However, at the moment it [producing materials] is not the first priority [for the employees in the field].”*

The environment where FCA operates sets additional restrictions to its external communication possibilities and, therefore, knowing the operational environment before communicating is recommendable. Interviewee number 3 argued that, *“In certain countries, we need to be especially careful in what we say out loud in order not to end up kicked out from the country.”* Interviewee number 1 claimed that, *“There are areas where we try to be invisible mostly due to security issues. However, in 95% of the cases we go with a profile.”* The safety issues need to be carefully considered when communicating. Censorship is also widely used and it sets limitations to communication. A risk analysis concentrating on appropriate external communications in FCA’s challenging operational environment also came up in one of the interviews. The risk analysis of communications refers to analyzing communicational safety risks in a specific area. This kind of research has not yet been executed but could be beneficial for FCA.

Above, several justifications for the importance of planned and coordinated external communication are discussed. NPOs, as any other organizations, need communications objectives and strategic planning so that integrated external communications are enabled. According to the interviews, open and perceptible communication about FCA’s operations is vital for assuring safe and secure activities, which means that more resources need to be allocated to communications.

5.3.1 External communication tools

External communication tools serve as channels to deliver information, raise awareness, create reputation and external image for an organization, and, finally, cause action. At the moment, FCA's headquarters have several external communication channels whereas the field offices have still much to develop. Even though at present the field offices' external communications follows to a large extent the lines of the headquarters' domestic external communications, it might be possible to utilize local and global medias to raise FCA's awareness and so, enhance the organization's credibility and gain more funding outside Finland. Interviewee number 1 mentioned that, *"The present communication lacks the global view. (...) There are many other reasons, such as credibility and co-operation networks, why it would be good to have international media along. (...) Of course, also local media are important but quite hard to get access. It [contacting the local media] requires time and experience."*

Web pages

At the moment, FCA's external communication is mostly directed for Finnish publics; there is a lack of seeing the potential in global communication. According to some of the interviewees, international web pages are an important channel for global communication and, therefore, are a vital investment that should be taken care of. At present, FCA has homepages available in Finnish, Swedish and English. Still, there are shortages in the pages in English, and the websites completely lack information in French and Spanish.

FCA's current websites may exclude key international stakeholders; especially in the areas where FCA has local employees. Interviewee number 1 claimed that, *"Here in Helsinki, we should have proper international web pages. They could be, for instance, in English and in French. At the moment, we have web pages in English but they are quite concise. (...) We should concentrate equally much on*

the web pages in English as we are concentrating on the pages that are in Finnish or Swedish. Because they [the web pages] are our calling-card when we talk about EU funding or when international media wants to check who we are. If this [the websites] is done badly or succinctly, no proper image will be created.”

According to the interviews, there have been discussions about creating field offices' own web pages and some of the field offices have already started constructing them. The field offices' own sites would serve as a channel to communicate issues relevant locally, for each area. However, there are several challenges to take into consideration when developing these pages. As interviewee number 7 suggests, *“It [each field office's website] should be done in coordination with our communication department in order to prevent FCA to start living its own life in a certain country. We need to consider how to keep the organization harmonious and uniform.”* This citation underlines the importance of organized communication and wide communication strategy. When planning the web pages, the interviewees mentioned that visuals and layout should be carefully considered in a way that all field offices' web pages look alike and are consistent with the FCA's home page. This was considered to be vital in order to easily link each separate field office to be part of FCA.

Social media

The success and importance of social media as today's communication channel is undeniable. Twitter is daily used by more than 40 million people; LinkedIn claims 45 million and has become an indispensable tool for job search networking. In January 2012, Facebook had 800 million members, Twitter 140 million and LinkedIn 100 million members (figures taken from their websites, January 3 2012). The popularity and the growth in the numbers of users is an indisputable fact. Jeff Weiner, the CEO of LinkedIn defines 'social media' as, *“The creation of content, information and knowledge, distribution of it, consumption of it, and leveraging social interactions. Whether that's a status update, sharing an image, a*

video or a blog post, even retweeting a headline or sharing a headline — those are all examples of social media.” (Weiner cited in Klein, 2011)

However, social media is a matter that has not yet gained much attention at FCA’s field offices. Even though FCA has its own Facebook pages and some of the employees are occasionally writing blogs from the field, so far the field offices have not completely realized the influence and power that social media might have. Interviewee number 1 argued that

“We operate already on Facebook but our field offices have nothing to do with this yet let alone Twitter. I think that they do not yet understand it.” It was mentioned in the interviews that there are couple of people from the field who write blogs but the local publics are excluded from this communication, as interviewee number 1 mentioned: *“Communication is mostly directed for the people in Finland.”*

Social media could serve as a tool to reach young people locally in the field, internationally, as well as in Finland. It might even serve as a channel for FCA’s internal communication between the field and the headquarters.

Paper marketing

In the developing areas where FCA operates, traditional paper marketing is still one of the major external communication channels. By paper marketing, the author refers to all materials that can be distributed, such as leaflets, flyers and information sheets. According to the interviewees, FCA’s external visual communication is fairly well done in the field. It was claimed that the visual materials, such as stickers, posters and placards are strongly present wherever FCA operates.

The interviewees mentioned that there is a lack of marketing communication materials in different languages. FCA also has activities in French and Spanish

speaking areas, but the materials in those languages are limited because of the lack of translation resources. Appropriate and professional materials for external communications were, nevertheless, considered extremely important among the interviewees. One of the interviewees mentioned that *“It is really important that we have brochures, and that there is a positive external image of the organization because it opens up cooperation possibilities with the local partners, with different civic organizations, with the United Nations, and with the European Union. They would see that this organization is professional, and its communication and brand are strong.”*

When considering the communication channels in general, the receiver’s technological readiness needs to be taken into account. Some technological tools that exist in the western world do not necessarily exist in the developing areas. Therefore, according to the interviews, the so-called paper marketing is still extremely important in the field.

5.4 Operating environment

This section provides answer to the third research question by explaining FCA’s employees’ views of the influence that the international developing environment may have on the field offices’ communication. This section is divided into two sub-sections discussing the language and the local culture.

The success of any organization is highly dependent on how it interacts and adapts to the external world, and this, in turn, as Courtney (2002, p.171) suggest, depends on developing a good understanding of what is going on in the external environment. This is why profound knowledge and comprehension about the operating environment, people, their cultural background, habits, needs and language have to be acquired. An organization should modify their actions according to the environment and adapt their behavior to fit the target area.

As mentioned earlier in the Thesis, FCA has expanded its operations internationally in recent years. Acting in new cultures, with people from different backgrounds who speak different languages, may cause challenges for any organization. In addition, FCA's operations take place in fairly demanding and unsecure conditions which forces the organization to plan its communication carefully. In this section, the challenges caused by varying language competences and cultural differences are discussed.

5.4.1 Culture

When an organization expands its operations abroad, knowing the local culture always has an important role in the success of the expansion. By using the term "culture", the author refers to national cultures unique to a specific area and for the people living there. In the following sub-section, the impact and role that foreign cultures have had on FCA's operations will be discussed.

As FCA operates in a multicultural environment in numerous developing areas, culture plays a crucial role, especially in FCA's external communication. The areas where FCA operates set certain restrictions and challenges for communication practices; thus FCA needs to consider what, when, where and how to communicate. Locals may be skeptic and have prejudices of westerners, and therefore, external communication needs to be even more culturally sensitive. As interviewee number 8 explained, FCA wants to co-operate with the locals by helping them constructively, not by commanding and telling them what they should do. In the co-operation and communication with the locals, FCA needs to be exceptionally delicate.

Even though FCA operates in a culturally diverse environment, the interviewees reported that culture has not yet caused any significant challenges for FCA's internal operations. This is due to the current REPs' origin which is Finland. However, in the future, the amount of international communication and

multicultural cooperation will increase. Some of the interviewees stated that the number of foreign employees in FCA will increase during the next few years. This means multinational and multilingual internal communication styles in the future.

5.4.2 Language

Due to the major organizational changes in FCA discussed above, it is natural that the employees' language competences vary a lot. FCA's employees have different kinds of educational and professional backgrounds and some have never been obligated to use English as their working language. However now, as FCA has permanently expanded its operations abroad, established field offices, and so, the importance of international and global focus has increased, there is a sudden need for enhanced communication skills also in foreign languages.

FCA has realized the challenges concerning their employees' language competences and reacted to them by organizing language training to enhance the employees' capability to communicate in English. Even though also other languages such as French and Spanish are considered to be important for FCA's operations, English language competence is a priority.

At the moment, the majority of FCA's employees are still Finns so it is natural that the majority of communication takes place in Finnish. However, according to the interviews, in the future, FCA will most probably also employ people who speak another language as their native tongue. In consequence, the significance of the organization's common language will increase and employees' language competences become ever more important. The interviewees' answers to the question about FCA's official language(s) varied to some extent. Interviewee number 5 claimed that *"Finnish, Swedish and English. All instructions need to be already in English, and there has been discussion that our [written and oral] working language will be English in the future. But there will be many challenges."* Interviewee number 3 agrees by claiming that *"There are major*

challenges in the common organizational language issue. For instance, the internal services department in Helsinki rarely writes materials in English which means that we have to translate them here in the international department. This is a waste of time in my opinion. ”

It seems that FCA has strategically reacted to this challenge of employees' inadequate language competences by organizing training. As van den Bron and Peltokorpi (2010) conclude, an international organization's employees should possess multiple language skills or at least a willingness to attend language training when the skills are underdeveloped. They propose that time must be given to employees in order to develop their language competences.

5.5 Future prospects and challenges

The globalized world today is increasingly competitive. Gorod, Gandhi, Sauser and Boardman (2008) suggest that in order to stay competitive, organizations have to make themselves available to a variety of alternatives, which may have a straight influence on their flexibility. In order to keep up with the pace, organizations need to adapt to the changing environment and modify their actions according to the external world. This may be especially challenging for NPO's as the resources are limited and the primary goal is not to make a profit. In the following, the potential opportunities and future challenges that FCA may face are discussed.

Developing the field offices' external and marketing communication

Developing field offices' external and marketing communication further may enhance the organization's visibility, recognition, and positive image.

Cooperation with the sister organizations and other partners enable executing larger operations.

Increasingly utilizing the potential of global and local media

As already mentioned above, FCA has mostly concentrated on national external communication serving the Finnish public. This seems reasonable as the majority of the private funders are currently Finns. However, taking an advantage also of global and local media in the field could increase FCA's credibility and enhance cooperation networks. It may also be important for fundraising in the future.

Maintaining FCA's positive external image

According to the interviewees, FCA seems to have a fairly positive external image in the areas it is currently operating. For example, interviewee number 5 claimed that she does not remember any serious negative publicity during her work history in FCA.

Taking advantage of the social media

Social media, as discussed above, is also a potential channel to increase the awareness of FCA and its operations. For instance, writing blogs and using Twitter are potential means to increase external communication and improve awareness. Using YouTube in sharing materials such as video clips also came up in one of the interviews.

Potential new technological innovations

Technological innovations are opportunities for any organization, naturally also for FCA. New technological tools are especially needed in enhancing communication between the headquarters and the field. Even though the interviewees were fairly satisfied with current channels in use, unreliable internet connections are causing challenges in communication. Skype is a commonly used tool for organizing meetings for employees from Helsinki and the field.

Nonetheless, Skype rarely works with the picture, so the interviewees mentioned that some kind of video conferencing technology that includes voice and picture, and that works in the challenging conditions, would be useful for FCA. This kind

of communication channel would possibly decrease the need for travelling and be an economical investment.

Enabling communication and sharing ideas between field offices

Cooperation and communication between field offices could enable sharing ideas and knowledge. The majority of the interviewees thought that collaboration between the field offices would be useful. Enhancing the intranet's usability would enable information sharing and create a sense of community within the organization as a whole. Also the possibilities that social media could offer in internal knowledge sharing and communication are recommended to be examined.

Directing resources to communications

Many of the future opportunities require resources and capacity building. In Haiti, there is a fixed-term communication advocacy officer taking care of communication related issues which has been, according to interviewee number 8, extremely useful and purposeful. Interviewee number 5 suggested that *“at least in the biggest field offices, there could be a person whose area of responsibility is communication. (...) The most important communicative investments for the field offices would be hiring a communication person and creating a communication plan for each field office.”* On the other hand, it was argued by the interviewees that the need for a communication person highly depends on the office and the situation. One way to build capacity is to educate people about communication. Interviewee number 7 suggested that *“It [a communication person] could be necessary if the resources were unlimited. On the other hand, I see that the people who are working there, they also know their work very well. So I would rather suggest that they [people already working in the field] could be educated for the communicative purposes and needs. However, space should be made in their job description so that it [communicative responsibilities] would not be considered as an additional burden.”* Another interviewee suggested that FCA's communication department could support the field offices in communication related issues. However, the most important decision in enhancing FCA's communication

practices is prioritizing. FCA needs to consider which operations are the most significant ones, and invest on those. The communicative objectives should be clearly stated as interviewee number 1 claimed: *“I don’t think that the objectives of communication have been understood or realized.”* If there is a lack of understanding the importance and the need for communication, resources are easily allocated to targets that are considered to be more vital ones.

5.6 Summary of the findings

The findings discussed above in the present chapter describe the current situation communications of FCA’s field offices. The importance of communication is commonly acknowledged among FCA’s employees but still other matters are currently prioritized. At the moment, communication is not coordinated or organized. No communicational guidelines exist at the field offices and the resources are limited. The external operational environment sets additional challenges for FCA’s communication practices. Several justifications for the importance of planned and coordinated communication arose from the interviews, which naturally would need resources. A discussion on the recommendations and practical implications of this study will be presented in the following chapter. The chapter will also answer the main research question of the Thesis by listing the issues that need to be considered in an international NPO’s communication guidelines from the perspective of a field office.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS.

This chapter gives practical and specific recommendations to plan, develop and improve FCA's communication practices from the field offices' perspective. The section is divided into four sub-sections, the first one giving recommendations for creating a communication plan for FCA's field offices by using the theoretical framework, the second one providing general communicational recommendations, the third one concentrating on internal communication, the last one presenting the recommendations for FCA's external communication and how the operational environment can be addressed. These recommendations are based on the interview data, the previous knowledge gained from the literature and findings being linked and analyzed through the theoretical framework.

6.1 Recommendations for creating a communication plan for FCA's field offices

In the previous sub-sections, recommendations for enhancing FCA's field offices' communication are presented. The recommendations discussed above provide suggestions for practical implications, explaining the expected outcome of each recommendation, and offering justifications for them. Answers to the three sub-questions presented earlier in the study were provided in Chapter 5 when introducing the findings of the Thesis. However, the main research question of this study can only be answered, in addition to the findings, by using the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3. The framework is applicable for both internal and external communication planning.

In the framework, the message flow is divided into five phases: communicator, message, channel, receiver and response. In each phase, there are several matters that may influence the success of the communication. When FCA is developing a communication plan for each field office, each phase needs to be considered separately and preferably analyzed to some extent. The framework can be used as a tool to guide the planning process for internal communication and external communication. By thoroughly going through each step in the framework, all

aspects of communication are addressed and thus included in the communication plan.

The communication plan needs to be simple but thorough. It needs to take all features of both internal and external communication into consideration, and give concrete recommendations of action. Doorley and Garcia (2007, p. 287) suggest that while developing a strategic communication plan, an organization's environment, strategy, individuals, messages, media, measurement and feedback, structure and staffing, and budget have to be analyzed. According to Drucker (1990, p. 144) people need clear assignments. If the communication plan and its outcomes are left to an abstract level, it is likely that the importance and the goal of the communication stay unclear and, consequently, no actions are taken.

Hargie, Tourish and Wilson (2002, p.415) state that it is crucial for the managers to know how well their communications are currently working. This is why it is recommendable to create tools to audit the organization's internal and external communication from time to time in order to be able to spot weaknesses and possibly improve it. The present author suggests that representatives from the communication department or the person in charge of the communication in the field are also recommended to be included to the board of directors where the strategic decisions are made.

In the following three sub-sections, the recommendations are presented in a form of a table. In the first column, suggestions for possible practical implementations are given. In the second column, the expected outcome is presented, continuing with the justifications for the recommendations in the third one. In the last column, possible additional information for the recommendation is given.

6.2 Enablers for FCA’s communication

In this sub-section, general recommendations concerning FCA’s and its field offices’ communication are discussed. In order to improve the field offices’ internal and external communication, the base for the communication must be in place. This requires efforts also from Helsinki headquarters. By considering the following recommendations presented in this sub-section, the field offices are better prepared to start developing their internal and external communications.

Define and clearly communicate FCA’s strategy, identity and values

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
Communicate FCA’s strategy, identity and values to all stakeholders in a concrete and understandable format. FCA’s stakeholders should be able to identify and accept the core of the organization.	FCA's communication is in line with its strategy, identity and values.	According to the interviews, an organization’s communication should be in line with its strategy and identity in order to communicate consistently.

Define the objectives and goals of the field offices’ communication

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
Consider and define what should be achieved through communicational practices. Make these communicative goals concrete to the employees.	Better understanding of what can be reached through communication and why it is important. Easier evaluation of the outcomes and whether the communication has been successful.	In order to be able to evaluate the success of the communication, the objectives and goals need to be clearly defined.

Conduct FCA’s stakeholder analysis

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
Examine the current as well as potential and desired stakeholder groups.	More successful and appropriate communication. Communication reaches the stakeholders.	In order to communicate successfully, stakeholders and their need needs must be identified.

Create strong and encouraging communicational culture within FCA

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
Enable regular and easy communication. Management should act as an example and encourage people to communicate and share knowledge. Provide resources and tools for regular communication.	Enhanced internal relationships within FCA. Encouraged knowledge sharing.	E.g. Meade (2010) claims that the ideal organizational culture should be one that encourages collaboration, loyalty and innovation.

Give clear, concrete and applicable guidelines

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Make communication concrete.</p> <p>Clearly state: What should be done? When? Why? By whom? Give personal guidelines and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Makes communication and communicational responsibilities more understandable, concrete and personal.</p>	<p>Several interviewees wished to have clear, concrete and applicable guidelines.</p>

Assign enough resources for communication

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Include communication in job descriptions.</p> <p>Assign budget and resources for communication in the field. Consider which operations are the most significant ones, and invest on those.</p>	<p>Enhanced and more efficient communication.</p> <p>Saving time and resources.</p> <p>Increasing awareness and credibility – more funding.</p>	<p>According to the interviews, it has been extremely useful to have a person whose responsibility is to take care of the communicational issues.</p> <p>Communication related tasks make a full-time job and, according to the interviews, it would be unrealistic to expect someone with other responsibilities to take care of them.</p>

Train FCA's personnel in communication

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Organize communication related trainings for the employees in the field.</p> <p>Educate employees to give interviews, perform professionally in the media, and give media releases.</p>	<p>Better knowledge of communication related issues.</p> <p>Professional external communication which results in enhanced external image and reputation, potentially also additional funding.</p> <p>More organized and efficient internal communication.</p>	<p>According to the interviews, one solution for building communicational capacity is to train the employees in the field.</p>

Include communication to annual country plan

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Include specific communicative goals and objectives in each field office's annual country plan</p>	<p>Concrete objectives for communications.</p> <p>It is easier to understand what communications mean in practice.</p>	<p>Communications need to be part of the field offices' annual plan in order to get resources and needed attention.</p>

Enable feedback

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Provide feedback tools.</p>	<p>Possibility to improve communication practices.</p>	<p>In order to be able to improve communication, feedback on its success is needed.</p>

6.3 Overcoming the challenges in FCA’s internal communication

Internal communications is often a challenge for any organization. For FCA, it is even more so because of its internationally dispersed operations, new organizational structure and limited resources. As discussed already earlier in the Thesis, no guidelines or communicative structure exist for the field offices. Consequently, communications is at the moment inefficient. In the following, recommendations to improve communications between the field offices and the headquarters are given.

Organize and coordinate internal communication

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Create clear and updated job descriptions and contact lists including information about each person’s responsibilities. Put the information available for anyone to check. as the job responsibilities change constantly in FCA (E.g. Intranet could be utilized for the employees’ responsibility mapping.)</p> <p>Make weekly and monthly check lists of the topics to go through with the field offices / headquarters.</p> <p>Make check lists of the topics to handle for every face-to-face meeting.</p>	<p>More efficient communication.</p> <p>Reduced time spent in inefficient communication.</p> <p>Limited number of irrelevant emails.</p>	<p>According to the interviewees, communication is not efficient or coordinated at the moment.</p>

Improve FCA's email culture

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Give clear instructions for who an email should be copied and when.</p> <p>Make well-defined codes when actions are expected and when emails are purely meant to inform.</p>	<p>Limited number of irrelevant emails.</p> <p>More efficient communication.</p>	<p>According to the interviewees, at present FCA's email practices are not efficient, as many people who are not concerned, are copied in the emails.</p>

Make the communication between field offices and headquarters more systematic and regular

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Start writing a weekly "newsletter" from Helsinki to the field (e.g. an electronic newsletter that sums-up what is happening in FCA.)</p> <p>Organize regular face-to-face meetings.</p> <p>Enable also informal communication.</p>	<p>Better understanding of what is going on in the field.</p> <p>Enhanced internal relations and feeling of togetherness.</p>	<p>According to the interviewees, personal meetings and face-to-face communication is considered important.</p>

Examine possibilities to enhance the intranet as a communication tool

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Improve Kuopeli's usability and user-friendliness.</p> <p>Make Kuopeli as a homepage for everyone.</p> <p>Examine the possibilities to enhance Kuopeli's usability also in the field.</p> <p>Make a consistent plan for informing the field offices where the intranet cannot be opened.</p>	<p>Increased intranet's usage rate.</p> <p>Intranet to become an essential internal communication tool.</p> <p>Enhanced communication and sense of togetherness.</p> <p>Information is available equally to everyone.</p>	<p>According to the interviews, intranet has potential to serve as a common communication channel if developed further.</p> <p>Information should reach everyone equally. (Klein, 1994)</p>

Enable communication and co-operation between the field offices

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Create settings for need-based communication, co-operation, sharing of ideas, experiences and knowledge</p>	<p>Enhanced knowledge sharing and discussion of experiences.</p> <p>Co-operation and closer relationships.</p>	<p>According to the REPs, need-based communication and cooperation would be beneficial.</p>

6.4 Field offices' external communication potential and the impact of their operational environment

As explained above, FCA's field offices have not yet done much for their external communication aimed at local or global publics. The external communications in the field as well as all marketing efforts and materials have been targeted through the headquarters to the Finnish publics. This has been the case due to lack of resources, other priorities and fairly new and small field offices. However, in order for the field offices to take the maximum advantage of the external communication for the local and global publics, concrete actions need to be taken. In the following, recommendations to enhance FCA field offices' external communications are presented and the challenges that the operational environment may cause are presented.

Analyze the external environment

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Conduct a risk analysis of the potential security issues concerning communication in the areas where FCA's operations take place.</p> <p>Analyze the cultural and linguistic differences in the areas.</p> <p>Analyze the potential limitations that the environment may have regarding technological readiness.</p>	<p>More secure operations.</p> <p>Appropriate behavior and communication to external stakeholders.</p> <p>Appropriate communication materials in the languages needed.</p> <p>Communication through suitable channels – the message reaches the receiver.</p>	<p>According to interviews, security issues and cultural differences need to be taken into consideration when planning the communication.</p>

Communicate locally and globally

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Conduct a media survey of all potential and relevant media in the operational areas as well as globally. Conduct a list of the key journalists to cooperate with</p> <p>Sign someone to be responsible of taking care of media relations.</p> <p>Encourage people to do networking and creating contacts.</p> <p>Use the most common search engines in external communication, e.g. Google.</p>	<p>Global communication directed to international audiences and fundraisers.</p> <p>Increasing FCA’s credibility and awareness among varying constituencies locally and globally.</p> <p>More systematic and efficient external communication in relevant international and local medias.</p> <p>Information about FCA can be easily found.</p>	<p>According to interviews, communication should be seen globally and directed also for international audiences.</p> <p>Communicating locally and making operations as visible as possible was considered to be important among interviewees.</p> <p>Raising awareness was mentioned to be vital in gaining funding.</p> <p>At the moment, if “FCA” is typed in Google, it does not give any links to FCA’s homepage.</p>

Develop web pages for international audiences

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Translate FCA's home page to French and Spanish and improve the site in English.</p> <p>Develop the field offices' own web pages to serve both local and international visitors.</p> <p>Assign someone to be responsible for updating the web pages.</p>	<p>Enhanced credibility.</p> <p>Information available for international audiences and potential funders.</p> <p>Enables informing the local stakeholders of the area specific matters.</p> <p>Updated and current information in the web pages.</p>	<p>According to interviews, FCA's web pages are the calling card for international audience and funders, and raising awareness is vital for gaining more funders.</p>

Translate external communication materials into relevant languages

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Discuss with the field offices what materials are needed. (Leaflets, brochures, flyers etc.)</p> <p>Outsource the translation to a professional.</p> <p>Resources need to be allocated to translation.</p>	<p>Increased awareness of FCA's activities in the local areas.</p> <p>Enhanced visibility of the operations and, as a consequence, improved security.</p>	<p>According to interviews, there is a lack of communication materials in the needed languages.</p> <p>In some of the interviews, translating appropriate materials to serve the field offices' external communication was considered to be the most important investment.</p>

Investigate possibilities of social media

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Investigate whether social media (e.g. blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) could be exploited in field offices and what the potential benefits could be.</p> <p>Study how social media could be used in external as well as internal communication.</p>	<p>A new communication channel for FCA.</p> <p>Staying modern and reacting to changes in the surrounding environment.</p> <p>Reaching young people.</p> <p>Raising awareness.</p>	<p>According to interviews, social media's potential should be researched. However, uncontrollable media may be risky and needs to be carefully considered and planned.</p>

Guidelines and plan for humanitarian crisis situations

Suggestions for practical implementation	Expected outcome	Justifications
<p>Give clear instructions and protocols when, where, what and who to communicate in the crisis situations.</p>	<p>Averts controversial messaging.</p>	<p>According to interviews, communication guidelines are needed for humanitarian crisis situations.</p>

7 CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the Thesis and provides a summary of the research aims, methods and findings. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 7.1 presents the summary of the present Thesis. Section 7.2 sums up the main findings of the study and presents managerial implications. Section 7.3 introduces the limitations of the study. Finally, section 7.4 suggests approaches for further research.

7.1 Research summary

The purpose of the Thesis was to identify the communicative challenges that an internationally decentralized NPO faces, and based on the findings to create guidelines to help in developing a communication plan for the field offices. Even though there has been a lot of previous research about organizational and international communication, combining organizational communication in the international field with NPOs' special features and challenges such as challenging operating environment, security issues and limited resources, is a fairly new approach. Recent changes in the organizational structure bring an additional twist to this study.

The main research question of the Thesis was: What issues need to be considered when planning an international nonprofit organization's communications guidelines for decentralized field offices? There were three sub-questions articulating more precisely the goal the study: How do FCA's employees perceive the challenges in the organization's internal communications? How do FCA's employees perceive the field offices' external communication and the possibilities to develop it? What is the impact of the operating environment (i.e. developing countries) on FCA's communications?

In the literature review, in Chapter 2, the topics relevant for understanding theoretical background of the study were presented. The aim of the literature review was to justify the objective of the Thesis: to examine what needs to be considered when developing a communication plan for internationally operating NPO. Section 2.1 introduced the essentials of communication in NPOs and gave insights to the special characteristics typical for such organizations, their internal and external communications, the importance of image and reputation, NPO's funding, and communication channels. Section 2.2 discussed the impact that the international context may have on an NPO's communication including cultural and linguistic challenges. Section 2.3 outlined the matters to take into account when creating strategic communication plan.

The theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3 followed the literature review and served as a guide in the research process. The framework was designed by combining the most essential elements discussed in the literature review. It was based on the communicator-message-receiver-response-circle taken from Munter's (2009, p.3) communication strategy (see Figure 2.6). It was, however, modified according to the knowledge gained from previous literature, including all aspects of an NPO's communication. In the framework, one can see how an NPO's communication is constructed and which elements have an impact on it. The framework is applicable for both internal and external communication.

The present Thesis was a qualitative study consisting of nine semi-structured face-to-face interviews and one email interview. As a result of the interview analysis, a profound understanding of the present state of the case organization's communications, needs and challenges was gained.

7.2 Main findings and managerial implications

This section highlights the main findings of the Thesis discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. They are presented according to the themes of the research questions: challenges in internal communication, the external communication and the possibilities to develop it, and the influence of the operational environment on communication.

Challenges in internal communication

At the moment other tasks are prioritized at the expense of communicative activities. Even though the importance of communications is acknowledged among employees, it was somewhat unclear what effective communications mean, how communications could be organized better, and what kind of impact it may have. The reason for inefficient communications was claimed to be the lack of time and resources. This study, however, shows that since communications are commonly agreed to be a significant enabler of an NPO's success, it should be integrated in the employees' job descriptions and given resources for.

Resources are wasted in inefficient communication as communication is disorganized and improvements in coordination are needed. Even though the communication between the field and the headquarters happens mainly between the REP and Head of the Unit, a lot of time and effort is spent in other departments in order to reassure that people get the information. The amount of received emails is exceeding and consequently, some important information may be lost in the masses of irrelevant emails. The organizational structure and the employees' responsibilities also change constantly, and for that reason, it may be hard to identify who is responsible of what.

It was found that the interviewees acknowledge the weaknesses in communications but no action to improve the situation has been taken. According to the interviewees communications are not efficient and shortages in

organization, coordination and systematic communication exist. Occasionally it was considered to be a burden.

Challenges and misunderstandings in the internal communications are potentially caused by long distance, time differences, communication channels, varying language competences, and restrictions in internet connections. The communication channels that are in use for FCA's communication between the field and the headquarters are email, Skype, telephone, intranet, and in emergency situations satellite phone. Face-to-face meetings are also arranged a couple of times a year. The interviewees claimed that a positive attitude, good internal atmosphere within FCA and willingness to help, facilitate communication in general between the headquarters and the field.

As FCA is internationally dispersed and has operations in multiple locations, regular communication and face-to-face meetings play a vital role in creating a feeling of togetherness and working for a common organization. This is a challenge for FCA as in the interviews the issue of the sense of not belonging to the same community as the people in Helsinki came up.

External communication and the possibilities to develop it

The field offices' external communication has not yet been paid much attention to. Nevertheless, the interviewees argued that increasing awareness among varying stakeholders play an important role in gaining funding and credibility for the organization. As there is no planned or structured external communication at the moment, the field offices' external image equals the image of its employees. This might be risky as the external communication is not controlled or well-organized.

According to the interviewees, traditional public relations, media relationship management, campaigns, articles, news sheets, personal relations, and briefings are considered to be important means to reach the communicational objectives

and favorable external image. Ensuring interesting and professional external communications, systematic and organized communications and delivery of external communications materials were mentioned by the interviewees to be crucial.

At the moment, the field offices' external communications are mainly targeted for the audience in Finland. Providing the marketing materials are directed to Finnish audiences and the potential that lies in local and global audiences are not seen. The communication channels that should be exceedingly utilized are the field offices' own web pages and social media. Providing materials also for paper marketing is extremely important in the areas where FCA is operating.

The influence of the operational environment on communications

The success of any organization is highly dependent on how it interacts and adapts to the external world. Acting in new cultures, with people from different backgrounds who speak different languages, may cause challenges. The operational environment sets additional restrictions to the field offices' external communication possibilities. Safety issues need to be carefully considered when communicating in each area. Censorship is also widely used in specific areas which set limitations to communications. One proposition to help coordinating external communications was conducting a communication risk analysis which refers to analyzing communication safety risks in a specific area.

The findings of the study highlight the importance of identifying and knowing the stakeholders. In order to be able to adapt the communication to be appropriate, one needs to know for whom the communications are targeted for.

Linguistic and cultural issues need to be considered when discussing the operational environment. As the field offices exist in an internationally dispersed area, challenges concerning the language arise. FCA has long had one operational language i.e. Finnish so all employees are not used to translating and operating in

a foreign language. Cultural sensitivity is important for external communications as well as possibly also for internal communications in the future if international employees are recruited in FCA.

FCA has many challenges and prospects in the future. In order to keep up with the pace of today's competitive world, organizations need to adapt to the changing environment and modify their actions according to the external world.

Increasingly taking advantage of new technological innovations, social media and communications directed to local and global audiences are opportunities for FCA. This in turn requires understanding the importance of communications, enabling smooth communications and sharing of ideas, and allocating resources for it.

7.3 Limitations of the research

This section reviews the limitations of the Thesis and analyzes the study from a more critical perspective. These limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the study; however, they do not diminish the trustworthiness of the findings.

The topic of the present Thesis was challenging because of the lack of previous research in NPOs' strategic communication planning. For this reason it was difficult to find specific models and theories which would fit perfectly to the present study. The previous research used in the Thesis is a combination of topics relevant for this study. When searching for previous research on NPO's special characteristics, several appropriate studies were found (Bryson, 1988, Drucker, 1990, Drucker, 1990, Henley, 2001, Vernis et al., 2006, Weisbrod, 1988, Vuokko, 2003). However, research that would have concentrated on an international NPOs' communications in developing areas was limited. The previous literature concerning internal communications, external- and marketing communications as well as international communications were mostly examining the issue from corporate perspective (Clutterbuck & James, 1996, Cornelissen, 2008 & 2011,

O’Conor & Szukala, 2001, Meade, 2010, Dortok, 2006, Hewitt, 2006, Argenti, 2003, Quirke, 1996, Aula, 2000, Aula & Mantere, 2005, Aula & Heinonen, 2002, Doorley & Garcia, 2007, Hargie & Tourish, 2004, Munter, 2009, Jones, 2008, Klein, 1994, Hewit, 2006, Adler, 1997, Jameson, 2007, van den Born & Peltokorpi, 2010, Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen & Piekkari, 2006, Charles & Marchan-Piekkari, 2002). However, these studies were used as a basis for the Literature review as NPO’s communications do not differ to a large extent from corporate communications, and there was limited amount of studies concentrating on NPOs.

The second limitation of the research was that the empirical part of the Thesis was a qualitative study of a single case organization. Consequently, the results are applicable as such only for this case. This sets limitations for the possibility to generalize the results; however, they can be used as guidelines for future research.

The third limitation of the study was the data collection method. The empirical research was completed by conducting semi-structured interviews which were later translated from Finnish to English. In this type of data collection technique, the results are always the interviewer’s interpretations. In addition to this, the author did not have extensive knowledge or experience on interview techniques prior to the present study. However, by reviewing and testing the questions for FCA communication’s department before starting the empirical data collection process, the author had a possibility to modify and develop the interview techniques as well as the questions. The analysis of the interview data was considered challenging as there were no ready-made models.

Despite of the limitations, it can be stated that the research is liable and valid, and the Thesis has produced trustworthy results. The trustworthiness of the study can be guaranteed by careful documentation and justification of the research methods, discussed in Chapter 4.

7.4 Suggestions for further research

There are different areas in this study that could be developed and examined further. As mentioned in the introduction, limited research has been conducted focusing on NPOs' communications. FCA as a case organization offers many possibilities for additional investigation. The organizational structure and characteristics of the challenging operational environment as such offer several themes that could be extended to the field of research.

The present study suggests at least four directions for further research. Firstly, further studies could concentrate on examining an NPO's reputation creation processes and the impact that external communications have on it. Secondly, more research attention could be given to the role of face-to-face communication in creating common organizational identity for an international NPO. Thirdly, further research could investigate the role of communication in fundraising. It was stated earlier in the study that effective communication has an impact on the successfulness of an NPO's fundraising, but this research could be extended to investigate how it could be measured. Fourthly and finally, researching the importance of peer support and cooperation between the field offices could be useful, and the importance of communication in this. The present Thesis focused on the communicative challenges that an internationally decentralized NPO faces by researching one case organization, gaining valid and important knowledge to be used for further research and expanded into future possibilities.

REFERENCES

ACT Alliance. Retrieved March 31, 2011 from www.actalliance.org

Adler, N. J. (1997). *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior (3^{er} edition)*. South-Western College Publishing.

Adler, N.J. (2002). *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior (4th edition)*. South-Western College Publishing.

Anheier, H. K. (2005). *Nonprofit Organizations. Theory, management, policy*. Routledge.

Argenti, P.A. (2003). *Corporate Communication*. The McGraw-Hill Companies.

Aula, P. (2000). *Johtamisen KAAOS vai kaaoksen JOHTAMINEN?* WSOY.

Aula, P. & Heinonen, J. (2002). *MAINE Menestystekijä*. WSOY.

Aula, P. & Mantere, S. (2005). *Hyvä yritys. Strateginen maineenhallinta*. WSOY Pro.

Britannica Academic Encyclopedia. Retrieved November 21, 2011 from <http://www.britannica.com.libproxy.aalto.fi/EBchecked/topic/759090/nongovernmental-organization-NGO>

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003). *Business research methods*. Oxford University Press.

Bryson, J.M. (1988). *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations. A guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Charles, M. (2007). Language matters in global communication. *Journal of Business Communication*. 44(3), 260-282.

Charles, M. & Marchan-Piekkari, R. (2002). Language Training for Enhanced Horizontal Communication: A Challenge for MNCs. *Business Communication Quarterly*. 65(2), p. 9-29)

Clutterbuck, D. & James, D. (1996). Internal communication: beliefs and practice in the organization. *Journal of Communication Management*. 1(3), 249-255.

Cornelissen, J. (2008). *Corporate Communication. A guide to theory and practice*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Cornelissen, J. (2011). *Corporate Communication. A guide to Theory and Practice, 3rd Edition*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Courtney, R. (2002). *Strategic Management for Voluntary Nonprofit Organizations*. Routledge.

Doorley, J. & Garcia, H. F. (2007). *Reputation Management. The Key to Successful Public Relations and Corporate Communication*. Routledge.

Dortok, A. (2006). A Managerial Look at the Interaction Between Internal Communication and Corporate Reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review*. 8(4), 322-338.

Drucker, P.F. (1990). *Managing the Non-Profit Organization*. Butterworth Heinemann.

Eckert, S. (2006). *Intercultural communication*. Thomson South-Western.

Ehrenreich, S. (2010) English as a Business Lingua Franca in a German Multinational Corporation : Meeting the Challenge. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(408), 408-431.

Eskola, J. & Suoranta, J. (1998). *Johdatus laadulliseen tutkimukseen (8th edition)*. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Finn Church Aid, Annual Report 2010.

Finn Church Aid, FCA's strategy 2009-2012.

Finn Church Aid, educational materials, retrieved January 5, 2011 from <http://www.kua.fi/fi/materiaalit/?id=11>

Fredriksson, R., Barner-Rasmussen, W. & Piekkari, R. (2006). The multinational corporation as a multilingual organization. The notion of a common corporate language. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*. 11(4), 406-423.

Ghauri, P. & Gronhaug, K. (2005). *Research Methods in Business Studies. A Practical Guide*. Pearson Education Limited.

Gorod, A., Gandhi, S. J., Sauser, B., Boardman, J. (2008). Flexibility of System of Systems. *Global Journal of Flexible Systems Management*. 9(4), 21-31.

Hargie, O & Tourish, D. (2000). *Handbook of Communication Audits for Organisations*. Routledge.

Hargie, O., Tourish, D. & Wilson, N. (2002). Communication Audits and the Effects of Increased Information: A Follow-up Study. *Journal of Business Communication*. 39(4), 414-436.

Hargie, O. & Tourish, D. (2004). *Key Issues in Organizational Communication*. Routledge.

Henley, T.K. (2001). Integrated Marketing Communications for Local Nonprofit Organizations: Developing an Integrated Marketing Communications Strategy. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 9(1), 141-156.

Hewitt, P. (2006). Electronic mail and internal communication: a three-factor model. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*. 11(1), 78-92.

Jameson, D.A. (2007). Reconceptualizing cultural identity and its role in intercultural business communication. *Journal of Business Communication*, 44(3), 199-235.

Jones, P. (2008). *Communicating Strategy*. Gower Publishing limited, England.

Katsioloudes, M.L. (2006). *Strategic management: global cultural perspectives for profit and non-profit organizations*. Burlington, MA : Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Key, J. (2000). Enhancing fundraising success with custom data modeling. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 6(4), 335-346.

Klein, D.S. (2011). small, small world. *Smart Business Northern California*. 4(4), 10-14.

Klein, S.M. (1994). Communication strategies for successful organizational change. *Industrial Management*, 36(1), 26-31.

Lawn, J. (2009). Networking, Social Media and One's Larger Circle of Friends. *Food Management*, 44(9), 6.

Luo, S. & Shenkar, O. (2006). The multinational corporation as a multilingual community: Language and organization in a global context. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37, 321-339.

Maylor, H. & Blackmon, K. (2005). *Researching Business and Management*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Meade, J.A. (2010). Strategic Planning for Internal Communication. *CPA Practice Management Forum*, 6(6), 5-9.

Mei, Y.M., Lee, S.T. & Al-Hawamdeh, S. (2004). Formulating a Communication Strategy for Effective Knowledge Sharing. *Journal of Information Science*, 30(1), 12-22.

Miller, K. (2003). *Organizational Communication. Approaches and Processes*. Thomson Wadsworth.

Munter, M. (2009). *Guide to Managerial Communication. Effective Business Writing and Speaking*. The Prentice Hall Series in Advanced Business Communication.

Neal, K. (2010). Stepping Up to the Plate: Developing an Effective Business Communication Strategy. *Information Management*, 44(2), 38-41.

O'Connor, D. & Szukala, B. (2001). *21st Century Communication*. A Scitech Educational Publication.

Quirke, B. (1996). Putting communication on management's agenda. *Journal of Communication Management*. 1(1), 67-79.

Ruusuvuori, J. & Tiittula, L. (2005). *Haastattelu. Tutkimus, tilanteet ja vuorovaikutus*. Osuuskunta Vastapaino.

Samovar, L.A., Porter, R.E., & McDaniel, E.R. (2006). *Intercultural communication: A Reader (11th edition)*. Thomson Wadsworth.

Sargeant, A. & Lee, S. (2004). Donor Trust and Relationship Commitment in the U.K. Charity Sector: The Impact on Behavior. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. 33(2), 185-202.

Ulijn, J., O'Hair, D., Weggeman, M., Ledlow, G., & Hall, T. (2000). Innovation, Corporate Strategy, and Cultural Context: What Is the Mission for International Business Communication? *Journal of Business Communication*. 37(3), 293-317.

van den Born, F. & Peltokorpi, V. (2010). Language policies and communication in multinational companies. *Journal of Business Communication*. 47(2), 97-118.

Vernis, A., Iglesias, M., Sanz, B. & Saz-Carranza, À. (2006). *Nonprofit Organizations. Challenges and Collaboration*. Palgrave macmillan.

Vuokko, P. (2003). *Nonprofit-organisaatioiden markkinointi*. WSOY.

Weisbrod, B.A. (1988). *The Nonprofit Economy*. Harvard University Press, England.

Welch, D. E., Welch, L. S. & Marchan-Piekkari, R. (2001). The Persistent Impact of Language on Global Operations. *Prometheus*. 19(3), p. 193-209.

Windahl, S., Signitzer, B. & Olson, J.T. (1992). *Using Communication Theory. An Introduction to Planned Communication*. SAGE Publications Inc.

Wolf, T. (1999). *Managing a nonprofit organization in twenty-first century*. The Fireside Edition Published by Simon & Schuster, New York.

Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case Study Research. Design and Methods (3rd edition)*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Yin, R.K. (2009). *Case Study Research. Design and Methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Zhu, Y., Nel, P., & Bhat, R. (2006). A Cross Cultural Study of Communication Strategies for Building Business Relationships. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 6(3), 319-341.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview questions for the REPs in the field

Teema 1: Sisäinen viestintä

Teema 2: Ulkoinen viestintä

Teema 3: Kansainvälisen ympäristön vaikutus viestintään

Henkilökohtaiset kysymykset

1. Mikä teidän toimenkuvanne / vastualueenne KUAssa on?
2. Minkälainen on työhistorianne?
3. Minkälaisia työtehtäviä olette tehneet KUAssa?
4. Kuinka kauan olette olleet töissä KUAssa?

Yhteistyö pääkonttorin ja kenttätoimistojen välillä

5. Mikä on kenttätoimistojen ja pääkonttorin välinen suhde?
6. Minkälaista yhteistyötä tehdään? Kuinka paljon?
7. Minkälaista viestintä on näiden konttorien välillä?
8. Toimiiko viestintä?
9. Mitä parannettavaa toimistojen välisessä viestinnässä olisi?
10. Onko kenttätoimistojen välillä yhteistyötä tai viestintää? Minkälaista?
11. Olisiko kenttätoimistojen välinen viestintä tai yhteistyö hyödyllistä?
12. Miten kenttätoimistojen välistä yhteistyötä voisi organisoida jos se on tarpeellista?
13. Minkälaisia viestinnällisiä haasteita kohtaatte omassa työssänne?

Viestintä kenttätoimistoissa

14. Minkälaista viestintää kenttätoimistoissa on?
 - Ulkoinen viestintä
 - Sisäinen viestintä
15. Onko viestintä tärkeää kenttätoimistojen kannalta?
16. Mitä viestinnällisiä haasteita kenttätoimistot kohtaavat?

17. Kuinka tärkeää viestintä on varainhankinnan kannalta?
18. Olisiko tarpeellista, että kentällä olisi erillinen viestinnästä vastaava henkilö?
19. Mitkä ovat mielestänne viestinnän kolme arvoa?
20. Mikä on mielestänne KUAn kenttätoimistojen tavoitekuva organisaationa?

Kieli

21. Mitä kieliä käytätte toiminnassanne?
22. Minkä kielen tulisi olla KUAn virallinen kieli?
23. Minkälaisia haasteita olette kohdanneet kieleen liittyen?

Viestintäkanava

24. Mitä viestintäkanavia tai työkaluja käytetään?
 - Sisäisessä viestinnässä?
 - Ulkoisessa viestinnässä?
25. Minkä kanavien käyttö on yleisintä? Tehokkainta?
26. Mitä puutteita viestintäkanavissa on?
27. Käytetäänkö intranettiä? Mielipiteitä siitä?
28. Kulkeeko viesti tarvittaessa tarpeeksi nopeasti?
29. Mikä olisi tärkein investointi viestinnän kannalta?
30. Miten organisoisit viestintää paremmin?
31. Mitkä ovat päämediat?
32. Näkemyksiä omien internetsivujen tekemisestä? Sosiaalisen median, kuten blogien hyväksikäytöstä?

Mielikuva, maine, tunnettavuus

33. Onko KUA tunnettu alueilla, joilla se toimii?
34. Minkälainen maine KUAlla on?
35. Kuinka tärkeää KUAn tunnettavuuden lisääminen on?
 - Kuinka suuri rooli viestinnällä on tässä?
 - Mitä keinoja tunnettavuuden lisäämisessä käytetään?

Kulttuuri

36. Minkälaisia kulttuurieroja kenttätoimistojen toiminnassa kohdataan?
37. Miten nämä erot vaikuttavat kenttätoimistojen toimintaan? Entä viestintään?
38. Ovatko kulttuurierot aiheuttaneet haasteellisia tilanteita? Minkälaisia?
39. Miten kulttuurierot tulisi ottaa huomioon kenttätoimistojen viestinnässä?

Turvallisuus

40. Minkälaisia haasteita turvallisuus kysymykset aiheuttavat alueilla, joilla toimitte?
41. Miten turvallisuus tulee ottaa huomioon viestinnässä?

+ Olisiko vielä jotakin muuta, mitä tulisi ottaa huomioon kehitettäessä viestintäsuunnitelmaa ja ohjeistuksia kenttätoimistoille?